

Max Picard

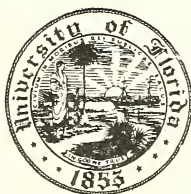
MAN and
LANGUAGE




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MAN and LANGUAGE

by Max Picard

Translated by
STANLEY GODMAN



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THE GIFT OF LANGUAGE

I

EVERYTHING that belongs to man's basic structure has been given to him in advance; it has all been ready for him from the very beginning, before he ever takes and uses it. Language is one of the things which is given to him in advance. "Language," writes Wilhelm von Humboldt, "must, in accordance with my deepest conviction, be considered part of the very constitution of man. In order to truly understand one single word, not as a merely physical stimulant but as an articulated sound describing a concept, language must reside in man as a whole and as a coherent structure."

Language is given to man. It exists before man begins to speak. Without it he could not speak. Man speaks in the language which has been given to him before he actually speaks. The gift is beyond all experience and it is outside man, yet it exists for man. It is something to which man comes and from which he parts again. The gift is a *numinosum*: it simultaneously repels man and attracts him. Man establishes his world between this to and fro. Time is based on the movement towards and away from the things that are given to man.

Language is given to man in advance, but the mira-

cle is that he is nevertheless free in relation to it and able to speak as he wills. This unity of activity and passivity, of freedom and compulsion in language, belongs to a sphere above the human level. This unity of opposites is in itself a proof of the divine origin of language.

Without the pre-given gift of language, every human being would speak a different language. Language is always ready to be used by man, and when he is not actually speaking, it is stored up for him in silence. The assurance and the calm in human silence comes from the certainty that language is always waiting, ready to be used whenever man wills.

If language had not been given to him, man would forever have to be creating the basis on which words could be spoken. Language would be a continual experiment rather than an absolute certainty.

It has surprised me that a disciple of Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, recognizes that language is inevitably a gift. "Language," he says, "exists in man before he learns to speak. Language teaches and interprets itself—that is the miracle of language." To begin with, a child expresses itself in gestures and sounds, just like an animal. Quite suddenly, however, a few words arrive from a different level. These words are no longer isolated sounds referring to single objects, they are an intimation of the gift of language as a whole. "Children would never learn to speak if they did not already possess language." * The language of children is nearer to the original gift of language than the language of adults. Children are encompassed by the

* Jean Paul, *Hesperus*.

gift of language; so densely surrounded by it that words themselves come through very slowly. The slowness of a child's speech is not due to the fact that he is learning to speak, but rather that speech belongs to an entirely different world.

The deaf mute, although he has no power of speech, nevertheless shares in the gift of language and, independently of the actual experience of speech, he is able to form concepts because he partakes of the gift that is given to all men.

II

Because language is a gift, there is more than just the words in a sentence, and a sentence is more than the mere sum of the individual words. There is also more in it than the speaker himself is aware of as he speaks the first words that make up the sentence. Conversation is able to give one another more than the participants intend to give, since language creates something that is beyond the capacity of those who use it.

"Does empirical language contain a latent language of higher potency?," asks Merleau-Ponty. The higher potency is what I call the pre-givenness of language. Language, because it is not created by man, contains more than the speaker himself knows and more than he can use. "When I speak," writes Franz von Baader, "I set in motion a power which I am not myself." Language raises man up beyond the merely human level. The gift of language hovers over us like a bright, distant cloud and man's eternal yearning is

the answer to the light of this hovering, beckoning, cloud.

Language contains more than man can use; therefore, language has a life of its own. Language has not been created for merely utilitarian ends. It is not simply "a total schematic description in sound-symbols of everything our predecessors have experienced, a collection of old material," as F. Mauthner has defined it. If language were used only for practical purposes, it would soon be worn out and shrink to nothing; it would sink and absorb all other sinking things. But the fact that it has an original being of its own sustains it above the level of the useful and informative. If language were nothing but an instrument for the conveying of useful information, silence would be sheer emptiness. Since, however, language is more than this, silence leads to man's beginning or his end. It leads to expectation.

The fact that language comes from a sphere above the world of information and utility gives it depth. Just as the figures in medieval pictures are related to the world of eternity by the gold background, so words are related to the eternal world by the divinely given being of language. The permanence and continuity that memory gives to language are also due to its divine origin.

The dynamic of thought is so great that language could not withstand it if it were not based on an eternal foundation. If language were man-created, it would be destroyed by the explosive power of thought. Man is more sustained by language than language is

sustained by man. There is more sustaining power in language than man could supply on his own.

The unrest in the human mind comes from an awareness of the original world of language which watches over it. The effort to improve the quality of human thinking is a response to this ever-watching, ever-guiding world. Unfinished thoughts venture out into the silence of this world or into human language; they are protected by the given world of language. They do not need to be perfect from the human side. Because of its relationship to the eternal world, language has a more than merely human power.

O world invisible, we view thee,
O world intangible, we touch thee,
O world unknowable, we know thee,
Inapprehensible, we clutch thee.*

III

The eternal and objective quality in language is the reflection of the divine Word by which the world was created and which is still actively at work in language. "The living Word which created and sustains the world," writes Baader, "still hovers in our hearts and on our lips."

The original and eternal being of language seeks to be realized by man; it is a *bonum diffusivum sui*, the goodness that strives to enter into human language and to expand within it. Without the aid of music the realization of the eternal language would perhaps be too violent, like a sudden eruption. The eternal world

* Francis Thompson, "The Kingdom of God."

is nowhere so evident as in language, for Christ himself is the Word by whose self-giving the world was made. Man is nowhere so near to the eternity of God as in language. The eternal being of language is immanently transcendent. It is the glory of human language that it is able to make the inaudible audible.

Often it seems as though, through the radiance of beauty, language were trying to return to the eternal world from which it comes. Sometimes it seems, however, that language has been given more than it can absorb; one feels that it contains words and insights which will only come into being in the future. Sometimes language seems to have dreamed itself into the future, to be walking in its sleep. Then again, it sometimes seems as if the eternal world of language has forsaken us, and then we nearly waste away. "I feel thoughts flashing through the mind," writes St. Augustine, "whilst the language of the mouth is slow and heavy. As language still rolls heavily on its way, thought has already retired to its solitary dwelling."

Because language comes from an eternal world, man is able to reach out beyond himself through language. But this is the beginning of the Fall. The moment man reaches the eternal world he is enchanted, but the very next moment he fears he may fall from the height he has attained. Rising and falling are both together in every word of human language. Language is the place where rising and falling occur without ceasing; the disturbance of this constant movement is inherent in language. The poet outsings the disturbance; rising and falling are dissolved in his song.

Joy and misery exist in human words, but there is

also the middle position where language spreads out like water in a river without banks, and man is still unaware of the eternal and original world of language.

IV

The world in which language has its being is original and eternal and within this world we converse with one another. This world enables us to communicate with one another. Today, man has turned his back on the eternal world and words have difficulty in reaching other persons. They are at cross-purposes with one another. "Thinking is speaking to oneself"; according to Jakob Grimm, "every thinking person is both first and second person." The eternal being of language is the whole basis of dialogue, of conversation with other persons. It is true that different people understand words in different ways. "Language is a cloud which everyone sees as a different shape," wrote Jean Paul. This cloud is the eternal in language and there is always more to it than one person can "see." Because the "cloud" is eternal, there is not enough room for it in the imagination of a single person. Nevertheless, one person can understand another; the differences between them are reconciled by that which is eternal in language. A basis of mutual understanding is created. "It is so difficult to demonstrate the different meanings and the imperfections of words in words alone," said Locke—that is, in words that are not related to the eternal world.

The eternal in language is the basis of all human encounters. It was to make human love possible that

the eternal came down into human language. Through language human subjectivity is related to the eternal and objective world. In the light of this world that comes to man through language, all the differences that divide men from one another fade into insignificance. The differences continue to exist, but they lose their violence. The differences cease to be the primary characteristic of human relationships.

In the world of today in which the human subject has lost its relationship with the eternal world from which it formerly received definition and identity, man has lost the basis from which he can move outwards to other men and things. To provide himself with a new basis he divides his personality into two, using one part of it as a substitute for the basis he has lost. The schizophrenia of our age is related to the flight from the eternal world.

V

Language has its true life in a world beyond utility and necessity, and it is this that makes man truly human since man begins where mere necessity ceases, where mere necessity is drowned by an eternal world. The whole structure of man is conditioned by this overflowing of the eternal, drowning the world of mere utility and necessity. That is why Esperanto and the so-called Basic languages are unworthy of man. These artificial languages are barely sufficient for mutual understanding; they are concerned with the bare necessities of human intercourse. They reduce human life to bare necessities. They represent a flight from the world beyond necessity. They make things

as bare and sterile as they are themselves. They are lacking in creative power, for their words do not come from the eternal world of true language. They have no breadth, no room for silence, and although man may not notice it, he is oppressed and depressed by this fundamental weakness. Such languages can lead to nervous tension (*Verkrampfungen*) and psychoses, for they reduce man to an explicable machine. In languages based on pure expedience there is no place for the inexplicable in man. The artificial languages contain no more than man has put into them himself. They are mechanical and inorganic, lacking in real vitality. They are no more related to the eternal world than is a motor car, and they are just as easy to take apart. There is nothing behind them; they are mere sound. All space and all time seem to have been crushed out of these artificial languages. Such languages are languages only for the moment. Divorced from the eternal being of true language, man loses all reverence for language; he lords and controls it and reduces it to the level of rudimentary signals. Not only the artificial languages, however, lack all relationship with the eternal today; language in general has become divorced from the Wholeness of the original language.

Leibnitz planned to establish a universal language; he thought that all concepts could be represented by a system of symbols just as the whole world of mathematics is represented by a system of numbers. But, like all artificial languages, such a universal language would be barren; it would not create anything new. Yet, this *lingua universalis* and Descartes' word-ma-

chine derived from the rich world of the baroque. They were one of its many whimsical ornaments. The artificial languages of today come from our poverty; they are languages of a world reduced to mere utility.

It is probably impossible to tell the truth in these artificial languages. It is only possible to make mere statements in them. Truth exceeds mere statement: it is related to something more than is capable of being stated, and truth ceases to be truth without this relationship.

VI

Language in the modern world is determined by mere subjectivity. Man experiences language; formerly language experienced man. Language spoke to man and that was why man's ability to make his own free use of language was significant.

Language has ceased to draw its life from the eternal world which existed before it ever had its own being. When language ceases to be related to the eternal world of Being, it forfeits the rich fullness of its true background and becomes hard and aggressive. It no longer comes downward from above; it pushes upward from below. Language is unprotected today; it is full of cracks and pervious to everything. It is like the human face which today is open to and absorbs all experience, lacking the substance into which may sink that which is not to be retained. Formerly language looked at man and man looked at language. Today he merely squints at it.

In language which is still related to the eternal world of Being there is a healing power for man,

but today it seems that it is language itself that needs healing.

Immortals mortal, mortals immortal;
living they live the death of them, in death
they die the life of them.*

Language itself seems to be speaking in these lines. Heraclitus seems to have caught language at the very moment it was conversing with the eternal Being. The lines contain a healing power over and above their actual content.

* Heraclitus, Fr. 62.

THE THINGS THAT ARE GIVEN TO MAN

I

EVERYTHING that pertains to the basic structure of man has been given to him in advance; it is ready from the very beginning before ever he uses it.

For man today, only his own subjective experience has validity. He cannot believe that anything outside himself, anterior to himself, has validity. Far from accepting things which have been given to him, man now rids himself of things even before he has possessed them. Faith belongs to the things that are given to men. Man believes with the belief with which he has been believed. But today everyone has to acquire faith anew in every moment since the world of faith is lacking in which man cannot help but believe with everyone else. Someone may say that it is man's glory to achieve faith in every new moment; it is man's glory because it is more difficult to achieve faith in this way, on his own, than to have it given to him along with everyone else. But what is more difficult is not necessarily right, and it is not right in this case because it is contrary to the human structure to be constantly making an effort. If man were always awake, constant effort would be natural to him. But man's life is not entirely and solely conscious; sleep and rest and dreams also have their vital part to play.

"The sleepers also work," wrote Heraclitus, "and contribute what is happening in the universe."

The capacity for knowledge is also given to man in advance. Descartes said *Cogito, ergo sum*—I think, therefore I am. But Franz von Baader replied: *Cogitor a Deo, ergo cogito et sum*—I am thought of by God, therefore I think and am. The way in which a thought is thought points to something beyond man which shares in him. Determined by man himself, the mind would not move on so many different tracks. Everything would be simpler, quicker, less circuitous, but there would only be a human truth, as though there were no other outside and beyond it.

Perhaps the abstract, general concept is an attempt to reach out beyond the individual to the eternal world which surpasses all individuals. But the eternal world does not strive outwards from the individual to the general. It is general from the very beginning and moves downward to the individual. There is a pre-given unity between men. Understanding and agreement are possible because man speaks into this unity. In their understanding of one another men seek to reach that unity that exists from the beginning, all ready to be found by man. More unity exists in the world than man can tear asunder, for the total unity is original and eternal. Man would be blown up by the dynamics of his own nature if there were not a greater uniting and reconciling force within him than he can break.

One human being could never forgive another if all men had not already been embraced by the great forgiveness that is at the heart of the eternal Being.

"Man is more protected than he knows. There is a great eternal spirit of forgiveness which encompasses all human deeds. How many terrible things pass through the human mind and spirit from six o'clock at the morning when he wakes up, to ten o'clock at night when he goes to sleep. Man is incapable of doing all the terrible things that occur to him; he is protected against himself. We are more protected than we know." *

Since the Fall, evil has also been given to man in advance. In all individual evil there is a reflection of all the evil done since the Fall. Man emulates in his own evil all the evil done since the Fall. Today, however, evil deeds seem no longer to arise from the Original Sin that is pre-given to man. Everyone seems to find evil on his own, as if it had never existed before. Formerly, a man was wicked because that was his share of the evil that is in the world, the Original Sin of man. Today when a man is wicked he seems to have created evil himself.

Death is a given fact of human life. Man does not merely die "his own death"; together with his own death he dies the death that is given to all men from the beginning. If death were not an eternal gift, dying would inevitably be much more violent; it would be like a sudden attack on the individual, unrelated to anything given, anything expected. The "Father" is a gift to man, in the form of the God-Father, and it is from this gift that all human fathers derive their quality and their strength. Their power to create a family comes from the Father who is above all fathers.

* Max Picard, *The World Destroyed and Indestructible*.

The motherly, the caring and cherishing mother, is a gift to man. There is more motherliness in the world than can exist in all mothers, for they draw their motherliness from this eternal source.

Man himself is a gift to man. There is more of the substance of man than he is able to realize. This extra substance in man is pre-given and surrounded by the *numinous*. This *numinous* quality in man inspires him with both fear and joy. At one moment it seems alien and strange, at the next utterly right and friendly.

The love with which man loves is given to him in advance. He was loved before he himself loved. But "before" and "after" is all one in love. The paradox of love is that it seems to have existed before any gift, including love, was made to man at all. "Love is the true ontological proof of the existence of an object outside our minds," according to Anselm von Feuerbach. There is only one other phenomenon, objective as love itself, able to supply this ontological proof: language.

When the words "I love you" are spoken, the love of the Thou as well as the love of the I is expressed. The subject I and the object Thou are together in the word "love." The word is subject, object and predicate all at once.

II

In love a person moves to an other person not from himself but from a higher level, the level of that which is pre-given, as father, mother, lover, forgiver. Constant contact with the objective pre-given world of

love provides a foundation for continuity and for faith and love.

"All these objective things . . . have a meaning of abiding validity, that of an objective validity which extends beyond the present cognitive subjectivity and its acts. They have an objective continuity which is available to everyone whether they are aware of it or not." *

III

Something inexplicable, eternally unexpressed, exists in man which corresponds to the things that are pre-given. It is wrapped in silence. The things that the Logos can explain belong to man; the inexplicable things belong more to God than to man, but man is allowed to share in them. (That is why man is a stranger to himself today. He lacks what really belongs to him: the world of silence in which he can meet the inexplicable.) Man often stands before himself as before an unintelligible being. He encounters within himself a zone beyond the realm of language, pointing to a future in which what is still inexplicable and silent will be revealed. All the inexplicable things in man and objects belong together and when they are left on their own they seem to speak to one another.

Paul, the apostle, said that he had heard "unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter." These words existed before human language and human silence, they are the unspeakable words of the Creator. They correspond to the unfathomable which is the mark of the Creator in man. This divine element in man responds to all the things that are un-

* Edmund Husserl, *Formal and Transcendent Logic*.

speakable and in the moment of response man is set back behind his own existence which is determined by the Logos. For a moment language is annulled and man is transported to a place which was before language and before the silence of language.

What is hopeless about rationalism is that it has no knowledge or experience of the things that are unspeakable and therefore no knowledge or sense of things that have yet to be revealed in the future.

IV

All creatures and the whole of nature aspires to be near man in whom the eternal, pre-given world is active. The sea extends on the horizon to the beginning of the sky; it almost ceases to be the sea. Suddenly, however, a ship with a man passes quietly across the distant surface and the sea seems to return from the far distance to be where the ship is, with the man.

In a storm the forest is burst open and the trees seem no more than the topmost edge of an abyss—then two human beings go through the forest, talking together and it is as though the forest were listening to their voices in a new quietness. The forest is calmed by the presence and sound of men.

When man has lost his relationship to the eternal world Nature seeks to leave him. The mountains are then merely a dark wall and the sea is only the surface covering up an abyss. The birds fly over it but the space in which they fly is like the reflected image of the abyss underneath them. Suddenly they cry and it is as though they were buffeting against its walls.

THE ORIGIN OF LANGUAGE

I

IN THE Old Testament God spoke to man directly. Man was not the speaker but the one spoken to. Space itself spoke; the words were engraved in the air. Men breathed in the words of God with the air. Words were laws. Obeying the laws was man's response. Man obeyed the laws; thus he had language.

Later on, man abandoned the law and language abandoned him. A dark, menacing light still comes from the law, a dark light fills out the hollowed space and threatens to invade us.

Language is empty because God no longer speaks. Human language hovers around this emptiness forsaken by God. True time is to be measured from the moment when God spoke. Language has had a history since that moment. Language is still alive today because it was once the vehicle of holy things.

When the Logos came to man it gathered together all words within itself and they came again to man, as if newly created. Fear departed. When words and things were still a unity, when words did not describe things but *were* things, and things named themselves simply by existing, there was no problem of language. Words were absorbed in things and things in words, each was cherished by the other. When the unity was

broken, the breach appeared with the violence of a novelty; everything else was broken simultaneously. Everything else was broken in advance. Words were broken away from the things they named; they were isolated from things and had first to set out to find things again.

Because of the break between words and things, space was divided too, and man faced a new frontier. And because time was involved in the break, death came to man. But history came, too, and language became a part of history; it had henceforth a history of its own and became subject to the process of change.

"Language is existence for others . . ." wrote Jean Paul Sartre, "before language can exist, it is necessary for the Other to exist." The problem of language began, however, with the Fall, when words and things were rent apart. The problem of the Other, too, has only existed since the Fall, that is, only since the disruption of the primary communion between man and man in which there was no difference between I and Thou.

Perhaps there was a danger in the paradisian unity of words and things. Man was not sufficiently distinct from things; he understood things and animals. He understood their language but he was in danger of mingling all too easily with animals and things. It was language, the break between words and things, that first set him clearly apart from animals and things.

Yet it is possible, even today, to wholly embrace a thing with a word and restore the unity between the word and the thing. Since the Fall, however, man has had to earn his language as well as his bread by the

sweat of his brow. When he succeeds in re-establishing the lost unity between words and things, he is lifted out of the history initiated by the Fall; isolated, outside time and space, in the isolation of the miraculous paradisiacal Beginning.

It sometimes seems as though things might swallow up language and bring it to an end. There is present in man a fear lest language may be taken away from things. He is afraid of being robbed of language and so he talks constantly, not trusting himself to be silent. He has been uneasy and insecure ever since the Fall.

Sometimes it seems, too, as though a thing had crushed under foot rather than merely swallowed the word that describes it; as though it had never had a word attached to it. Without its attendant word, a thing becomes a menace. An African idol often seems to have shattered all words in order to lord it over man.

In some pieces of sculpture, for example, the ivory figures of the 9th and 10th centuries and Romanesque sculpture, words seem to have been swallowed up by the figures, absorbed by them, though not entirely buried. The surface of the face covers the language underneath as though with a cloak of silence.

There also exist objects which are not accessible to words, for example, the colossal walls of Etruscan cities and those of Mycenae. Their silence responds to the silence in man, establishing a unity between their own silence and the silence in man.

If in spite of this silent unity man speaks in the presence of these walls, he feels that it is a miracle

that he still possesses language at all. He is rather afraid. He, man, stands before these walls, but language, which constitutes the nature of man, seems to vanish into non-existence or to exist by a mere accident, on sufferance.

II

It is wrong to say that language arose out of the collective activity of man ("The sound of language is originally the expression which accompanies collective activities")* for, if that were so, animals would also have acquired a language from their "collective activities."

It is also wrong to derive language from gesture.† Gesture belongs to a totally different category from language. It is not distinct from the passions by which it is caused; it is mixed up with them. It is part of them and usually expresses a desire. Language, on the other hand, expresses a *being*, a whole, not merely a desire that is only a part of being and not a whole being in itself. Language has in it more of the substance of whole being than passion and desire. Language is in fact such an uncommon being that it creates being itself. Gesture, on the other hand, has no independent store of being from which it can draw to give to other phenomena. It scurries along with no independent existence of its own.

Man would never have been able to reach language over the stepping stones of gesture, for gesture has something of the unredeemed about it, and only through a special creative act can it give rise to something free. Language is clear and free and sovereign,

* Ludwig Noire: *The Origin of Language*.

† As suggested by Étienne de Condillac, Maine de Biran and Henri Bergson.

rising above itself and leaving everything behind it except the silence from which it comes. Gesture, on the other hand, is unfree, unredeemed, still completely mixed with the material it uses in its attempts at self-representation. It is still inside the material and bound up with it, not approaching the material freely from outside as the spirit approaches the word. It is true that gesture precedes language in the child, but that is not the essential point at all. The essential point is the appearance of language in the child quite independently of the gesture that precedes it, and oblivious of the previous existence of gesture. The precedence of gesture is not the point, but rather the fact that by a creative act each new child is redeemed from gesture.*

Language, leaping out of silence, comes into being suddenly. Cause and existence are a unity. Language did not evolve; it was created by a single act. It was not acquired by man slowly and gradually, but given to him as a finished whole.

As with a blind man suddenly restored to sight, all the images of his former darkness seem to be absorbed by the one image now before him. So everything that could have existed genetically before language suddenly vanishes with the advent of a single word.

It has also been suggested that language derived from animal sounds. But the animal's cry is not an act by which something new is brought into being. The cry belongs to the animal in the same way as its body belongs to it. In the animal's body, action and cry are a unity. The animal is enclosed inside its own nature and cannot reach out beyond itself by means of language. It often seems as though animals were try-

* Picard, Max, *The World of Silence*.

ing to tear themselves apart in a search for language. Not finding it, they go on tearing.

Cardinal Polignac is reported to have said to the orangutan: "Speak—and I will bless thee"—a dictum which suggests the distance of the animal from man, not its nearness to him. According to Jean Paul, "Language is the finest dividing line of infinity, the dividing water of chaos . . . on dumb animals the world makes a single impression."

III

It has also been said that language originated in the imitation of the sounds of nature and animals. But the sounds of human language do not derive from the sounds of nature and animals. On the contrary, those sounds aspire towards the level of human language. The lower creatures urgently desire to reach the human level of communication. Birds do not sing because they cannot speak; singing is part and parcel of their basic constitution. But they sing at the periphery of human language. The murmuring of the brook is a sign that it is waiting to come near to human language. In the silence that follows a clap of thunder, it seems that language will arise from the silence—and then a bird suddenly sends its song, through the silence and all at once a human voice is heard, lured by the song of the bird.

The following words of Jacob Böhme also apply to the origin of language: "The only thing the creature does not know is its creation; nothing else remains hidden from it."

LANGUAGE AND SOUND

I

THE sovereignty of the spirit is seen in the fact that it combines with that which is utterly opposed to it, with sound. The spirit uses its antithesis, vaguely wandering sound, to achieve definition, and, by this process, sound itself is defined in language. Sound which expands into infinite space is brought back to itself, delimited by the delimiting action of the spirit. The outward expansion of sound is transformed into a spiritual expansion. By subjecting sound to itself the spirit comes alive. Sound is seized by the spirit, and tamed. Sound resists but is overtaken, captured by the spirit.

Sound is physical—one becomes intensely aware of that when listening to someone whose language one does not understand. The spirit seems to be trying to impose a pattern on the raw material of sound. When one does understand the language, however, it does not occur to one to think of the antithesis between sound and spirit, for the sound is completely absorbed by the spirit.

The suddenness with which the spirit subdues the sound in language is the suddenness of all spiritual creativeness. All languages use more or less the same vowels and consonants, but the spirit forms the sounds

into words which are different in every language. The spirit is so sovereign that it is able to create different languages from more or less the same materials. "A breath of the mouth becomes a picture of the world, the type of our thoughts and feelings, says Johann von Herder. "Everything that man has ever thought, and willed and will do in the future depends on a moving breath of air." The "breath of air" attaches itself to words, to be moved and molded by the spirit. In the sound itself there is a readiness to be ordered by the spirit and this is seen at its most sublime in music. Physical sound is absorbed by the spirit, it is pervious to the spirit, it allows it to persist as pure spirit. Sound dies in the spirit and rises again as spirit. In the vanishing of sound there is an intimation of the fading of man himself in death. Sound scatters in all directions but the spirit is always superior to the scattering sound, always retains the mastery. The ubiquity of the spirit annuls the fading of the sound of language.

Sound, which seems of all things least compatible with spirit, exists in language as if it belonged directly to the spirit. This unity of opposites could never have been brought about by man himself; it is a further proof of the divine origin of language.

II

All sounds, even those into which the spirit has not yet entered, are subdued along with the sound that has been subdued by the spirit in language and these sounds include the cry of animals. In language sound represents all the material which has not yet been permeated by the spirit. Is that not a sign and a promise

that one day all things that are now separated will be reconciled and joined together? The unity of sound and spirit has been projected from the beginning of Creation into the world of mutually separated things.

By being transformed into spirit, sound is able to bring the world of nature to the life of the spirit. The "w" in "wave" lends movement to the word; the "b" in "breath" makes it rise; the "d" in the word "hard" gives firmness and hardness to the word itself.

In the Somali language the various tenses of the verb are expressed by different pitches of the voice applied to the same word. In Chinese a word acquires a different meaning according to whether it is spoken with high or low pitch. These are examples of the way sound is used by the spirit in language.

The sounds which express grief and sorrow, namely, "o" and "i," intensify the physical and natural in language.

Weh Weh Weh Weh

Jo Damon, we reissest du hin? *

It is as though no space existed in the spirit for pain and grief; as though it still needed the sounds of the natural world and wanted to have nature by its side to protect it.

The cry that escapes from a man in fear or sudden pain—is as though he were trying to drown himself in the physical sound of the cry, trying to disappear therein in advance of his real death. Sometimes a man

* Johann C. F. Hölderlin, *Oedipus*.

returning from crying regains himself and is restored to wholeness.

In spite of the use the spirit makes of natural sounds, language cannot have arisen from things onomatopoeically. The onomatopoeic can reproduce only a single characteristic, the audible. The onomatopoeic is secondary. The word "crow" contains more than the loud cry of the crow. If words were determined solely by acoustic impressions they would be dependent on things; the complexity of things would be expressed by the sound of the word, not by the spirit which is able to represent the whole complex nature of a thing in verbal sound. The spirit would have to follow the thing; it would merely echo it. The spirit would not be sovereign, nor would it be spirit.

Sound can remain connected with the things of nature in a demonic way, escaping from the sovereignty of the spirit and taking it into the lower service of the mere sound: "Those who are familiar with the use of exorcism say that the same form of exorcism loses its power when translated into another dialect beside its own. There is therefore in the qualities and peculiarities of the very sound of words an inner force which has power to bring about this or that." *

In the act of speaking, primitive man moves his body more violently than civilized man. He is more affected by the act of speaking and his whole body is involved in the effort to share in the union of spirit and sound. "What primitive man achieves by accent and change of sound, by means of the thorax, gesture

* Origen, *Anti-Celsus*.

and his whole physique," writes Vossler, "civilized man achieves by the structure of his sentences."

When a child is beginning to speak it seems as though other things besides those immediately pertaining to language are trying to fight their way into the words. The spirit is not yet firm enough, it merely grazes the sounds. In children sound still has an independent existence of its own. The child throws the sound up like a ball and finds pleasure in the flight of the sound.

Children are not yet able, and old people are no longer able, to subjugate the sound to the spirit. At the end of life spirit and sound begin to separate, just as everything separates and disintegrates at the end of life. The separation that takes place between sound and spirit is a kind of anticipation of the end. Where the spirit has completely disappeared, as in amnesic aphasia, names become mere sound. Only the mechanical act of speaking remains.

The activity of the spirit in language can also be lacking in a healthy person. Words then become mere verbal noise, hardly more than a purely phonetic phenomenon.

The miracle of Pentecost by which the divine word was understood in different languages took place because the spirit of the divine word was so powerful that it entirely permeated the body of language. Language became entirely spiritual and in the one spirit the diversity of languages was annulled.

From the lofty height where the body of language becomes wholly spiritual, language falls again and

again, becoming empty, material, physical. But in the depth of its fall, language is aware of the height from which it has fallen, becomes aware of itself and rises up again, only to fall once more as soon as it reaches the summit. Thus language lives, between falling and rising, now almost dying and then living again.

III

As if in reward for its services to the spirit, the spirit allows sound to be as free as the spirit itself; in other words, sound is allowed to become music. "It is more likely that music is the sublimate of language," said Jakob Grimm, "than that language is the precipitate of music."

When language is pushed to its uttermost limits, however, it begins to change into music. In Nestroy one can hear the music of Mozart, and if Mozart had not existed it might be possible to divine from Nestroy that Mozart is an inevitable constituent of the world.

In music, sound becomes so independent that it hovers, as though in independence of man, between heaven and earth, wholly filling the space between them, and bringing them together. Through music, space becomes infinite and the infinite is filled. When man sings, the song seems to come to him from that space between heaven and earth, flowing into him rather than flowing out of him.

It seems that music is trying to fill the space with pure sound so that in this purity, the purity of the original word may be regained. Sometimes, too, music seems to be trying to send language to sleep and keep

it asleep until it is awakened by the original word with music and language alike absorbed by it. "Music is silence, which in dreaming, begins to sound." *

But music dreams of language, and in dreaming it encircles language and dreams on behalf of language.

* Max Picard, *The World of Silence*.

LANGUAGE AND LIGHT

I

WHEN a word is spoken, the air is filled with light. Language exists to bring light into the world. Even before the word that is spoken has been understood, there is more light. It has been said that thoughts anticipate words. It is, however, not the thought that runs ahead; it is the light that words send on in advance. Words are spoken in a light of their own. "*Loquere ut te videam*": "Speak that I may see you." Speak, so that, through the words you speak, you may come into the light, that I may see you. The light of language points to a knowledge which exists before words and a knowledge which exists after words. Human knowledge has its place between these two.

The light of language cannot be "used." It raises words above the level of the purposeful to a place where language is undynamic, moving and shining in pure light.

II

Without language darkness would only be opposed by clearness. Language turns clearness into light. Whereas to the animal the day is merely clear and bright, to man the day is light. Light is opposed to darkness, but it does not derive its true life from this opposition. Light is light as though there were no

darkness. There is darkness in language but in no other place may darkness be so near the light as in language. The darkness in language strives towards the light. Without language darkness would be abandoned to itself and everything abandoned to darkness.

Silence belongs to language and therefore it is not opposed to light. Silence is not darkness. Silence is diffused light, waiting to be gathered into one light, the light of language.

Sad words are no less light. Their light is dark and sad words are consoling because even darkness can be radiant with light.

In falsehoods the light burns through the space they occupy, and devours them.

Between the darkness of birth and the darkness of death man stands brightly in the center, because of language. The brightness of language reaches back to the darkness of birth and pushes this darkness further back into the past and the darkness of death further into the future. Through the light of language, birth and death are impelled outwards to the edges of human existence. Birth and death are the black edge surrounding the light of language. In the animal, which lacks the light of language, birth and death are nearer to one another.

III

The light in Rembrandt's pictures does not come from the subject. On the contrary, it brings light into the subject. It is the light in which the subject has its origin. Rembrandt's light comes from the light; it is

self-creating light. In Rembrandt's *Resurrection* the light that precedes language and the light of language itself are one. Language is absorbed by the light; the angel who stands within the light is merely a denser light. Light, angel, and language are all one. The inconceivable has here been made visible and expressible: everything is for ever but *one* light.

Here is the light in which God made the decision to redeem man. The light in this picture is the light which God created for man that he might find himself again after the Fall.

In the painting of Herkules Seghers things seem to be refusing to accept the light of the word: they seem truculent and obstinate, but perhaps the light has been taken away from them: they are in the half-light of sadness. In the mantle of sadness, man also holds things together.

In the Old Testament, words seem to have just dug themselves out into the light; a trace of the original darkness is still in the light; a silence is still in the language; the language is still wholly turned in on itself, dazzled by its own light.

In the New Testament words fall down from the light, even when they are not spoken: they are like the dew of light.

Today there is usually no light in language; words are merely illuminated by other words which are in turn illuminated by still others. The light is indirect.

IV

Hegel calls light "the subject of Nature, that is, Nature which has come to itself, nature which com-

bines with itself by means of its own creation (the sun)." But, it is language that first turns the outward brightness into light. Language projects the inner light of man into outer space. Pascal was frightened by the infinity of outer space, and rightly so: the infinity of space is outside the realm of light and language. Space becomes infinite only when it is beyond the reach of language. It threatens to absorb the space of light and language. When the inner light of language is present, man is at home and unafraid. The brightness of outer space and the light of language aspire to one another. In the light, man grows upwards. Animals merely spread along the ground towards their darkness. Even in the brightness of space, animals are like mere shadows of the light.

V

Returning home at night to the village, seeing the first light in a house is like the beginning of a conversation. The light is like the beginning of a conversation. The warmth of conversation is already kindled by that first light. The language within the silence of the lonely traveler is suddenly at home and already almost audible, though the traveler is still as silent as before. He may pass by the house with the light, but his dark silence becomes brighter in the light. He can already hear himself and others speaking in the light. Goethe wrote:

'What is more glorious than gold?' asked the King.

'Light,' answered the serpent.

'What is more refreshing than light?' asked the King.

'Conversation,' replied the serpent.

VI

There is hardly any real light in language today. Language burrows under the true light, whither it knows not. Instead of light, there is only sound. Words clash against one another: sound replaces light. The verbal noise which is what remains of true language, flickers like a smoldering fire in sodden hay, without light. One verbal noise smolders its way into another.

But language has an urge to become light. Language is light which enjoys being light. Language comes from sound and turns into light. Sound becomes light in language. Words that would otherwise drift and be scattered are gathered together in their own light. Do we not say "in the light of memory"? Language is of the same nature as light. It is self-contained and yet everywhere at the same time. Even in the darkness, the world, without knowing it, is permeated with light.

LANGUAGE AND THE WORLD OF PURE BEING

I

LANGUAGE is pure being, that is, it is more than the sum total of all the things which it mediates and effects. It is something that exists on its own, beyond all immediate purpose and effect, and something that can never be wholly explained. This quality of pure being is radiantly present in a few lines of a poem by Goethe that appears in his *Chinesisch-Deutsche Jahres-und Tageszeiten*:

Unwidersprechlich allgemeines Zeugnis,
Streitsucht verbannend, wunderbar Ereignis!
Du bist es also, bist kein blosser Schein,
In dir trifft Schaun und Glauben uberein.

The world of pure being is so great that it can only be wholly filled by Truth. Language itself urges man to the truth so that language may be wholly filled.

The inexplicable in the being of a language only becomes meaningful when it is set in relationship to the most pure Being of all, that is, God himself. "I am that I am"—there is a residue of this absolute Being in language. Language is what it is, pure being in which the spirit lives.

The Ten Commandments were expressed in lan-

guage and the absolute being that is in language thereby achieved a direct relationship to God.

The Ten Commandments could have been made known by means of sculpture. The gods had declared their will in Stonehenge and the Egyptian sphinxes, but man is overwhelmed by the crushing power of these stone monuments. Language enables him to retain his freedom, it does not bow him down.

The absolute being of language is so great in the Bible that God himself could appear again therein. The absolute being of language exists for God's sake as well as for man.

If the absolute being of language were not bound up with love, it would exceed itself and overwhelm man: it would become a threat to his existence. The absolute being of language keeps man steady; it saves him from the violence of excessive dynamism.

Man himself first becomes pure being through language. Not only man, however, but also the whole Creation acquires pure being through human language. The existence of objects is confirmed by language and thus, through objects and words, the world is formed.

The pure being of language is connected with the other basic phenomena, with Nature, love, birth and death. Language is strengthened by its connection with these phenomena. The sound of language is revealed more clearly as the sound of man when he is confronted with the sounds of nature. The silence of language becomes a real human silence when it is silent in face of the silence of nature.

There is a relationship between Death and Lan-

guage: Language is purged of aggressiveness by the tears that flow through words on the death of a beloved friend. Language which shrivels up when it is forced into the narrowness of the all-too-purposeful, expands and opens up again when it is thoroughly warmed by joy.

II

"We still say, 'The sun rises,' instead of, 'the sun is reached by the earth.' " * But because language belongs to the world of absolute being, the sun does rise in language. It not only seems that the sun rises, the sun really does rise, since it rises for man; it is only on the plane of physical abstraction that it is "reached by the earth." The truth that belongs to the world of pure being gives validity to what appears to be a mere illusion.

In his "Architectural Fantasias in Medieval Poetry," I. Trier speaks of the "remoteness from language" of medieval architecture. But the pure being of language also contains silence and with this silence language does have contact with medieval architecture. The architecture is taken up into the silence and is not isolated and remote. Architecture is only isolated when language is no longer strong enough to contain the silence within, that is to say, when language has lost what truly belongs to it. Then it ceases to have any relationship with the silent being of architecture, because it has lost its own essential silence.

* Mauthner, *Beiträge zur Kritik der Sprache*.

III

Language belongs so much to the world of absolute being that it seems always to have existed and never to have passed through any process of becoming. The pure being of language is so intensive that it would recreate itself if it were destroyed. Words do not exist only in man. They are engraven in the air and would be heard again in the silence which would follow the destruction of language. Language belongs so much to the world of absolute being that it is able to draw past and future into its own present life. A word sometimes contains past and future as well as the present. "There is something prophetic and inspired in languages," so wrote Joseph Joubert. Through the absolute purity of its being, language is able to absorb and retain foreign words as if it had always contained them, as if they had always been part of it.

"The German language will never be impoverished by its hospitality to strangers," wrote Jean Paul, "since it is forever producing from its own eternally fruitful roots a hundred times more children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren than the foreign offspring which it adopts. Centuries hence the forest that has arisen from our own roots is still bound to overshadow and stifle the foreign words which have germinated from seed sown by the wind."

IV

Because it belongs to the world of pure being, language comes between man and things. Man is unable to take direct possession of things because language

forms a barrier. The power of pure being that is in language creates a space between man and the object. There is no such intervening space between animals and things because animals do not have language. They take hold of the object before them unchecked by the restraining power of language; they possess the object even before they take hold of it. The distance which language creates between man and things inspires him with a reverence for things. Animals are merely afraid of things. When man destroys language, he also destroys this reverence for things and reverts to a purely animal fear of things. Fear and unrestrained action belong together. Reverence for things brings language near to their origin. Without this reverence and respect, language becomes hard and unprotected, a mere tool which can be used for any purpose and which can be replaced by anything and everything.

THE MEANING OF LANGUAGE

I

HUMAN language is woven into the whole pattern of the world. If man did not take things up into human language, they would speak for themselves. The world would be in a state of constant eruption and catastrophe. Things would have no continuous existence; they would always be changing. It would be a world of magic. The gods who are not conditioned by language and do not condition language, would become idols and monsters. Man too would be changed: he would be bewitched. Language holds man and things fast, keeps them from changing and exploding. No measure and moderation existed when there was no language. In the era of Ichthyosaurians, animals and plants were of exorbitant size. There was a solitariness in these primeval forms and a vain attempt to break through the solitariness. There was a melancholy in them but an unspiritual melancholy. In this primeval world the rays of the sun were dark. It was a world seemingly lying in wait for something and expanding into a world of measurelessness. Without language, space and time are undivided: never-ending space and never-ending time albeit not with the neverendingness of eternity. "As the dumb creation swims about in the external world in a dark bewildering sea of waves,"

wrote Jean Paul, "so man would be lost in the starry heaven of outward phenomena if he did not use language to divide the light into constellations, thus resolving the Whole into parts capable of assimilation by his conscious mind." Man does not do this dividing up of the Whole for himself alone: he does it on behalf of the whole creation.

With the advent of language the eruptions of Nature cease and law appears. The silence of things is no longer menacing for it is bound up with the silence of man and the language of man. Man is saved by language from the menace of silent things. At the same time, through language, man liberates things. Even today, when man abandons a lonely countryside it seems to develop on its own again: the plains grow larger, rocks are forced up against the sky, waters are forced into the depths of the earth and waters from the depths destroy it.

When language is destroyed man loses his relationship with the Original Word from which his own words and their measure are derived. The external world also reverts to anarchy and confusion. Things become exorbitant again. This time, however, it is man who provokes the measurelessness. In the automatically expanding world of technics, language has lost its power over things and they develop on their own. Things resemble one another at the beginning and end of time according to Giovanni Vico. What was natural in the beginning is imitated concretely at the end.

Martin Heidegger believed, "The nature of man is determined by the nature of Being." On the contrary:

the nature of Being is determined by man, by the language of man. Being opens itself up so that it may be determined by man and brought into the word of man. Once Being is no longer determined by man, it rebels against him and determines itself.

II

Language is not a mere collection of symbols: otherwise man himself would be a mere symbol, a number related only to other numbers. Death would merely be man's arrival at number nil. Brice Perain says it is a weakness of language that there is not a special word for every single object and situation. But this is not really a weakness at all. If every object and every situation had its own particular word, language would cease to be language: it would be a collection of symbols and numbers. There would cease to be any encounter between man and the object: the object would merely be registered. Man would be deprived of the free act by which he takes hold of the object. Where there is no freedom, as in a dictatorship, man himself becomes a mere number, like objects themselves, a unit to be registered, a cipher which the dictator can destroy at any time.

According to Ernst Cassirer, language is a "form of symbolism, based on the organization of the world into things and processes, into permanence and transitoriness." * Language is that, but it is also more than that. If language were only symbolical, man would have no future: he would only have memories: everything would be retrospective. Language is more than

* Ernst Cassirer, *Sprache und Mythos*.

a form of symbolism; it is immediate reality, so much so, indeed, that things become symbols when confronted with the reality of language. It is through language that man has developed, and it is this that gives words their reality. Language is more real than the reality by which it is confronted, since man came into being through language. When He became man, Christ would have shattered human language if language had only been a form of symbolism. Language was real, however, and the reality of God came into the reality of the word.

It is only possible to believe in the reality of language if one believes in the reality and value of human life. No tyrant keeps his word because human life means nothing to him.

III

It is the fact that God has spoken to us that makes our own speech understandable. The superabundant life that came into human language because God spoke to man, supplies the basis for understanding between man and man. In the process of understanding and passing on to others what he has understood, man participates in the superabundant life of God; he shares in the act of love which is in this overflowing from God. Understanding is a participation in the superabundant life of God. Language is indeed what Friedrich Schlegel called "the great collective memory of the human race," but it is not the memory of knowledge and experience alone, it is also the memory of its divine origin.

In silence, language has knowledge of God: language remembers God in the silence, when man has

already forgotten Him. In the language of knowledge there is a reflection of divine knowledge, for man can know only because he has been known by God, through the Word by which man was created. Man's knowledge is possible only because of the knowledge that is pre-given. Human knowledge has its being on a higher plane than man could attain by his own unaided effort. Language lifts man up above himself and above the words he speaks. "Man would not be able to know the nature of things if he did not owe his original status and stability to thinking and speaking," according to Franz von Baader. Language comes from outside man and has an innate tendency to move on from one man to other men. Language presupposes the existence of others. Separation from others, self-exclusion from others has to be brought about by a special act, since language binds man to his fellow-men. Language has a unifying power. And because language and thought exist from the very beginning in relationship with other men, man can never entirely succeed in inflicting on others the evil he would dearly like to inflict. The other person is protected because he is present in the thinking and acting of him who intends evil towards him.

Man does not speak only in order to know. He speaks to be known. All knowing contains the question: Am I known by him who makes it possible for me to know at all? Knowing is an asserting and also a questioning. In every sentence that is spoken there is an echo of the answer to God's question: "Adam where art thou?" Man desires the truth that he may be known by God in truth.

In the modern world, truth is mere statement, state-

ment that is uninhibited by any question to Him who makes all statement possible. The answer is no longer given to another, that it may be tested by Him. Questions are no longer answered by answers, but by other questions.

By using language as its material and foundation, science inevitably proceeds beyond it. A new "Logos," which is guided and controlled by a different principle from that of linguistic thinking, now emerges and develops with increasing precision and independence. And compared with this new "Logos" linguistic forms seem mere hindrances and obstructions, which must be progressively overcome by the strength and character of the new principle.*

IV

In every moment of time man is able to reach out beyond his own structure and his own past by means of language. Because they lack language, animals are imprisoned within themselves. Man is always developing through language. Animals remain mere animals. They are imprisoned in the world. On dumb animals "the world makes a single total impression." Human gestures are different from animal gestures. In animals they are a substitute for language—in man they are the opposite of a substitute, they are language overflowing into the human body and allowing the body to share in language and thought.

Man is involved in language even when he is silent. Silence is more than unspoken language. Words are present in the silence; they are an organic part of the human face and form. The faces of the Madonnas of

* Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolical Forms*.

Cimabue, Duccio and Simone Martini are silent and in the silence they would revert to the infinity from which they have come if they were not waiting for language. Why is it that language and not pictures became the specific expression of man? Pictures are not so clear as language, though pictures contain thought. But whereas thought is alive and awake in language, in pictures it is more in a state of repose. Words are more direct than pictures.

V

"We need only to draw the curtain of words in order to see the tree of knowledge clearly and purely," wrote George Berkeley. But this curtain does not really hide anything: it is transparent but also necessary: it prevents an all too violent encounter between man and things. For animals, objects are an extension of themselves: that is why they rush straight at them. Animals are nearer to things because they lack language; but they are also far more at the mercy of things than is man. Language helps man to possess objects but it also helps him to keep his distance from them.

When language stands as a barrier between man and things, things are unable to penetrate man so directly; their demonic powers are filtered through the medium of language. Language replaces the natural immediacy of the animal world with the immediacy of the spirit. The direct and the indirect are opposed to one another and yet they co-exist quite peacefully in language. Man could not have created this co-

existence and it is yet another proof of the divine origin of human language.

VI

Language is more than the expression of man's inner emotions. The expression may correspond to the emotion but it is not bound to do so. It has been said that the Englishman expresses his state of health in the form of a state of being (*I am well*), whilst the German uses a verb of motion (*Es geht mir gut*), thus indicating the more static and conservative nature of the English compared with the more dynamic and mobile nature of the German. It is possible, however, that the German expression is not a precise representation of the inner situation: the expression may be an attempt to get rid of that in the inner spirit that disturbs its stability. Language may in this way be an aid to the inner life.

Man is also protected by language since it does not allow everything to reach him. There exist in the world things more terrible than can be expressed in language. Much of the fear that men feel today comes from the inhuman world beyond language, by which language itself is threatened. The dictator sets no bounds to horror and tries to remove it from all contact with language and its moderating influence. The world of the dictatorships was a new world, imitating in demonic fashion the beginning of the world before the existence of language. Speech was powerless before the gas ovens in which millions of human beings were done to death. The shriek of the dictator flogging his helpless victim, and the shriek of the victim being

flogged was one combined, undifferentiated shriek. Language was no longer present: only crime and speechless fear. The dictator's only answer to atrocity was still greater atrocities.

VII

Language is clear, thanks to the clarity of the Logos; and it is mysterious, thanks to the mystery of the Logos. "Language is revelation and mystery at one and the same time," said Hamann. Language is mysterious even when it is revealing. Man is more mysterious when he is speaking than when he is silent. Man is a mystery to himself when confronted with his own words. Clarity in language exceeds the clarity that is needed to make a thing clear. Thanks to this excess of clarity, a light proceeds from language to the object. The super-clarity of language is light and the object to which the words give a name, shines in this light. The light is the joy of the object at being with the word. But the light of the word reflects the Original Light. This clarity and this light form the mystery of language. Nietzsche thought the mark of the genius was that he gives a name to what has always existed but has never been named before. But genius not only gives a name to the hitherto unnamed; it also creates new unnamed things and new things that cannot yet be named. These new and not-to-be-named things are a manifestation of the immanent-transcendent. Lack of clarity is therefore not always a weakness: it can be quite legitimate—an intimation of that which must still be veiled. Man has to learn to wait patiently until the veiled word shall be finally revealed.

LANGUAGE AND TRUTH

I

MAN speaks in the language which was filled with truth when God spoke in it. There is a sadness in language because God is no longer in it Himself; there is a despair in it, a disillusionment, a rising and falling, a backward and forward movement, a searching for something that has been lost. Language is waiting for Him who was in the Word.

In poetry language seems to forget its despair: the space left empty by God is filled by poetry. Poetry does not, however, fill the empty space with the violence of an invading army; it is always ready to vanish at any moment. Then, when poetry has gone, the yearning for the expected Word becomes still greater than before and the sadness too is greater. Poetry reminds us that the space occupied by language also belongs to God.

There is a circumspectness in the ancient languages, a slowness and a premonition of the coming of Christ. There was a greater awareness in the ancient languages of the future coming of Christ than there is in modern languages of the fact that He has come. Languages today vie with one another to forget that Christ has appeared in the Word.

II

When truth is in language, it exists in language so directly that it seems to have always been there. Truth is in language as though it had had no beginning. All beginnings are swallowed up by its omnipotent sovereignty. Truth sometimes develops. It does not need to develop for its own sake, but man lives in time, and in order to help man, truth adapts itself to his nature. It may be however, that in the process of developing, Truth itself intends to relate all things to itself.

Lying always has the character of something that has evolved: it drags its whole background around with it; it leers at its own past; it is bent with leering; it is incapable of pure being; it is insecure; it lives on what it can attract to itself; it has no self-sufficient, self-subsistent being of its own.

Truth is so powerful that one sentence which contains truth can provide truth for all objects whatsoever. The one thing about which the truth has been told stands proxy as it were for other objects. It is the same with a perfect poem: it may contain but one or two objects, but the whole world seems to exist in such a poem. It has the power of attracting other objects to itself.

When an object is lied about, all objects, not only the one immediately affected, are distorted. That is why the liar is afraid. He cannot bear the fact that he himself may be involved in the general falsehood resulting from the lie which he has created.

Language is unable to tolerate too much untruth being expressed in it. If too much untruth has passed

through it, language is still able to speak the truth, but it is no longer able to retain it. It just manages to speak the truth but is no longer able to give it the space it needs to be secure. Truth has no real existence in language any longer; it appears only to disappear again.

There is a surplus of truth in language which does not appear in the spoken word. This surplus impels language into the future, to new objects until all objects shall be brought to the reality of the truth. Language comes alive through this movement into the future; it prevents truth from stagnating.

III

"It is never sufficiently considered that a language is really only symbolical and metaphorical and only expresses a reflection of the objects." * The fact is that the object loses the immediacy of the physical in language but makes up for this loss by gaining the immediacy of truth. The immediacy of the physical is covered by the immediacy of the truth. The physical material of the object no longer needs to force itself upon man, and because language belongs to a world, the world of truth, the object acquires a new fullness, the fullness and immediacy of a world.

Language is delimited by the fact that it belongs to a world, the pattern of which imposes a limit. On this frontier, however, there is a sense of what lies beyond the realm of language. It is only when language is reduced to mere verbal noise that it has no limits. Verbal noise is vague, here and everywhere, and at the

* Goethe, *Farben Lehre*.

same time, nowhere: that is the boundlessness of verbal noise.

There is a difference between a mere statement and the truth. "That is a tree" is merely a statement. The sentence becomes true only when the tree is set by man in the order within which he himself exists. But truth forms an arch over the mere statement and draws it up into itself. Even before it is taken up into the truth, the mere statement is drawn towards the truth. The earth and man would be oppressed by statements—they would lie all around us as if in densely crowded warehouses—if truth did not raise them up into itself and take them out of themselves.

The outward physical form of man is also confirmed by the truth. The act of truth, the decisive, delimited, sovereign act of truth corresponds to the decisive, delimited, sovereign quality of the human form. The upright human form is a pendant to the truth of man. The human form would be thrown upwards by the truth if it did not point upwards already of its own accord.

It is not sufficient merely to speak the word of truth, or merely to repeat it. It must have come to man by an act of decision; only then will it have the appearance of real truth. A man can be utterly permeated by the truth. His body will then be transparent like the transparent shadow which is around the truth. The surplus which is in truth speaks in and through the body. The truth has become man and begets the truth.

"Truth does not need to be spoken in order to be known; it may be possible to get at it more certainly

without waiting for the actual words, without even taking them into account at all, from a thousand outward signs, from certain invisible effects which correspond in the world of the spiritual to what atmospheric changes represent in the physical world," so wrote Marcel Proust.

Human society must be based on truth, above all on truth. Then love will not be consumed by lavishing all its effort on building a true society. If the society exists on the basis of truth, love will overflow from it and thereby become wholly itself.

LANGUAGE AND DECISION

I

THROUGH language God made a decision for man before ever man was able to make a decision. Decision is woven into the structure of the world. Freedom is given to man in advance, and this alone makes it possible for him to perform his own act of freedom. Man does not become free through himself but through this divine gift of freedom. Language itself brings freedom to man. Language contains from the very beginning a movement towards the act of freedom. Language has contact with the very beginning when the decision for man was made.

God is always in freedom, therefore in him language and silence are one. He is silent through language and speaks through silence.

When man speaks he is in the realm of language with his very first word, in the realm where he is free to decide for good or for evil. Even when he does not make a decision, he is in the place where decisions can be made. In the very act of speaking man rises to a higher level.

It may be that the first word arose as an exclamation of fear: man was afraid because he, man, was able to move, by his own decision, into the place where God himself makes his decisions.

The act of freedom gives man more than he himself has put into it. More than merely man himself is active therein, for man is more elevated by the act of freedom than he could elevate himself: he attains more than he himself intends.

Language itself is exalted because it is in language that man makes decisions; it is ready for decision and waits for it.

The fullness which is in the mind of man, belongs to decision. Whatever it is that decisions are made about, that is not intended to be alone. It wants to be taken up into a world, into the fullness of the human mind and spirit.

II

Man is man by dint of language, but he only becomes a subject when he makes decisions with and by means of language. Decision strikes, like a clock, and the person, the subject, comes into being. Man is created by God but he creates himself once again through decision.

When he is silent and before he has made a decision, man is not wholly himself, he is spread out in his own silence and still connected with all the silent things outside man. The silence of man and the silence of things are not yet entirely separate; man is not yet clearly delimited. He is still exposed to the transforming influence of the things with which he is connected.

Man is usually only in a state of preparation for *becoming* a subject. The subject is constituted in de-

cision. Previously it is, as it were, the pre-subject waiting for the decision.

Man becomes free by detaching himself, through decision, from his former connection with all the silence in and outside him. That is the basis of all freedom.

Through decision man becomes as one who has just been created. His whole history and genesis is absorbed by the decision: the decision stands on its own like a thing, decision speaks, speaks to itself, word and thing are one. For a moment, at any rate, object and subject, word and thing, I and Thou are without any discrepancy. For a moment—the moment of eternity—the unity of paradise is attained.

Often when man fails to make a decision, he tries, without noticing it, to gain assurance of his person through illness and pain. Some illnesses are due to loss of the I, to lack of decision.

Through language that is spoken aloud man summons himself, brings himself to himself, but that which was connected with him in the silence, is part of the spoken word. It shares and wants to share in the act of freedom. Man takes into the act of freedom that which cannot make decisions for itself, the silence within him and outside him. The words which are contained in the silence within him wait for man to make decisions in them, too.

All things, a whole world, as well as words themselves quiver in the language of the pre-Socratics.

The monologue in tragedy accords with the extraordinary nature of decision. The subject, that

comes into being through decision, is alone in the monologue with the words with which it has made its decision; in the monologue, language, which has arisen in decision, has the joy of hearing itself.

III

When he is silent man is dispersed in a vagueness of time and space. Existence and actuality are created by the language of decision. Time, reposing time, is created by decision. This time is opposed to chronological time. Chronological time is stopped. If man were always able to make decisions, he would live in an eternal present. Space also ceases to be unlimited when a decision is made. It is delimited by the decision and becomes real space, space that belongs to man. Things are protected in this space. They are taken out of the realm of expediency and restored to their true wholeness.

In the space where decisions are made man meets again the basic phenomena of love, happiness, death, and suffering, waiting to be brought to reality through decision. The act of "freedom, emerging from the unfathomable depth of individuality," according to Karl Humboldt, is able to embrace the transcendent quality of things.

The space and the time which jump over themselves outside the realm of decision, overtake themselves again, and fill themselves again.

The language of the Bible is the realm of continuous decision; there are not enough men and things to be decided in it. The space of the Bible expands continuously, because the act by which God made his

decision for man, never ceases. Therefore, the words of the Bible have not passed away, because the divine act of decision is always in it.

IV

Through the act of decision a surplus comes into being, which exceeds the act itself. A surplus is released and impregnates other objects besides the object which made it free. The almost divine characteristic of the act of freedom is that it acts creatively of its own accord. Man himself is sustained in the sphere of freedom for a time without having constantly to maintain the act of freedom. It is unnecessary for man and things always to be determined by a new decision: the surplus in the *one* decision maintains him in the right order automatically. Thus he experiences self-identification, inner continuity. That is the gift of grace which proceeds from the act of decision. It makes the breathlessness of continuous decision, which is so characteristic of dialectical theology, unnecessary. In this realm man is also prepared for faith.

The surplus sustains not only the individual who has performed the act of freedom, but others, too. The act of freedom is performed for others: it creates a fellowship. This is the real fellowship of man.

The surplus exists above all for the sake of those who are unable to decide for themselves. Thus love is brought into being, without a special act.

What surplus is lost, however, when the act of freedom is no longer performed? The human world declines; it becomes poorer, weaker, when it is deprived of the help of this surplus. It becomes disordered,

since man is incapable of setting in order everything that is set in order of its own accord through the grace of the surplus. The surplus is the enduring grace which is bestowed on human freedom, which man can give himself, so to speak, the grace from below. The world of man is inevitably impoverished when it is missing. The world becomes colder and poorer without it. This is the true entropy, not the entropy of the universe, but that of the human world.

Decision for evil brings about a minus, hence the horror that follows an evil deed: one feels not only that evil itself is shrinking, but the world with it.

In the moment before a decision, man is for a moment in the place where the fall of man has not yet taken place. But when he falls, it is like the first fall, the enormity of the first fall is repeated.

A contradiction in conversation evokes a sadness in the speakers, which is deeper than the sadness evoked by mere dissension. The sadness reaches down into that depth where the original dissension, the fall of man, arose. A conversation nearly always begins with hope and nearly always finishes with sadness.

In the language of mathematical and physical formulae there is no past from which guilt reaches into the present. The language of mathematical formulae which has no past, and modern man, who has forgotten his guilty past, correspond to one another. There is a great forgetting in these formulae, and it sometimes seems as if the only reason they are so naked is that they are waiting for that to be restored to them which they are lacking. They are yearning to

be related to man's past and man's guilt in the past. Therefore they seek desperately to create guilt in the present and the future.

V

Language itself is regenerated by the act of decision. In this sphere of the Original, language itself becomes original again. An insignificant or worn-out word attains significance by being taken up into the act of decision. In the language outside the realm of the decision one word rolls on to another; the mass of words moves forwards horizontally, almost without any form at all. By the act of decision, the horizontal structure of language is transformed into a vertical structure; *man* now fetches up words by a special act. Words no longer fetch other words: the horizontal movement from word to word is interrupted by the vertical line which goes from man to the object and its word. Words are released from the normal flow; one can almost hear them being detached. Through the act of decision a word is applied only to one object. Words become exact again. In the act of freedom words are chosen and delimited. Man's style is formed. The clearer the act of freedom is, the clearer is the style.

In the Bible words always move from the speaker to the object and then back again to the subject, and then to the object again. There are, as it were, barriers between the individual words on account of this vertical structure; one has to get over this barrier before one can get to the next word.

The poet is able to restore originality to language: he possesses the original language *before* all decision, and decision may seem superfluous to him. He is in danger of despising the act of decision.

Language is destroyed when man no longer makes decisions in it: one word becomes glued to another like gelatin. When man no longer makes decisions in words, the gelatinous mass of words rolls him along wherever it wills. The I no longer exists, it is only indicated in an exaggerated fashion: one assumes that it exists where it is indicated.

Freedom is the light in human action, just as language is the light in sound, and light is the radiance of space, the eye of space. Freedom lives in this fellowship of light.

VI

The I can therefore bring the Thou to itself through the surplus that is in decision. This is not antithetical to the following statement by Ferdinand Ebner: "The existence of the Thou does not presuppose the existence of the I, but, vice versa, the existence of the I presupposes that of the Thou"—for I do not think that the I creates the Thou, but that the I is created by the surplus that stems from God, the surplus which lies in the decision of the I.

Ebner regards language entirely from the angle of the relationship between the Thou and the I. Language does not exist, however, only for the sake of the Thou and for the sake of the I, but also for the sake of the objects: the objects seek for a correspond-

ence in words, the pure facticity of objects would be still more dense and material if they had no correspondence in words. Things would sink down still more into the merely material, they would sink down into themselves, into even more compressed material, if the vaulted sky of words were not above them, which draws them upwards. Things are held in balance by language.

If the I and the Thou were on their own, the I would be in danger of taking itself and its devotion too seriously and the act of decision would then be like a monument, not a self-evident part of the world.

Ebner holds the I and the Thou in the clamp of a polar antithesis. The danger of polar concepts is that they reduce the objects which they apprehend to the pure formality of an antithesis. Ebner was protected from this danger by the earnestness of his existence; in every moment he was a being created by the Thou of God and in the next moment a being dissolved by the solitariness of the I, and then in the next moment again a being created by the Thou of God and again sinking down in the solitariness of the I; constantly having the Thou and losing the I—in his existence the creation of the I and the loss and recovery of the I were a unity, the two situations were only separate in reflection.

The I would inevitably cease to be in the Thou of God, it would be absorbed by the Thou, if the Thou itself did not withdraw from the I, withdraw in love and so leave the I free to turn to the divine Thou. The I and the Objects would be absorbed by the

divine Thou, the I and the world would disappear therein, if God in his love had not left a space between himself and the world. Hence the *a priori* and transcending quality of all space, hence too the infinity of space.

LANGUAGE AS A TOTALITY IN MAN

I

LANGUAGE is a totality in man; a totality which is a reflection of the divine origin of language. Language exists in man before he speaks; the whole of language is silent inside him. "It is impossible to conceive the origin of language as beginning in the description of objects by single words which are then put together to form a language. In reality speech is not made up of single words which precede the formation of language as a Whole. On the contrary, the single words proceed from speech as a Whole." *

Like the bird which, flying from our colder clime to Egypt in the autumn, has Egypt inside itself—Egypt is as much part and parcel of the bird as the feathers on its body so that when it arrives in Egypt it is only where it has always been—so language is always inside man as a totality. Even before he speaks it is inside him as a silent totality.

Language is in man as a totality and permanently—hence the continuity of man. Language is the basis of man's spiritual and intellectual continuity.

The relationship of language as a totality to the individual word is like that of humanity as a whole to the individual human being: the totality of all

* Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Einleitung zum Kawi-Werk*.

words is in man, in his silence. It exists for man just as the whole of humanity exists for the individual although he cannot see it.

Language as a totality helps man to maintain the category of the Whole in general.

Language exists as a totality even in the deaf mute. He cannot speak, but he understands the relationships of things: he has inside himself the whole silence of language and by means of this silent language he is able to penetrate the barrier of muteness. He shares in language; he is one of those who speak, since those who can speak speak for him. The deaf mute is like a piano without notes: every movement of the dumb keys is like an unspoken word.

Is this perhaps the origin of Socrates's saying that all learning is memory? Confronted with an object, language remembers itself, remembers what it contains. The object is already contained in the silent language.

II

When man speaks, he fetches the words from the silent language within; he takes them out of their silent, almost vegetative relationship with other words, and sets them in a new context by means of the Logos. Language becomes whole again through the Logos.

Through the logical order of spoken words the whole of the dark interior language is recreated in the light. Does not conversation contain, apart from many other things, an attempt to raise the whole of the dark interior language into the light of speech? To

provide the words taken from the silent interior language with a new context is an act of love. Love and language belong together.

Through the silent language which he has within him, man is related to everything that is vague and undetermined, belonging almost more to these things than to himself. It is the spoken word which first gives him definition. The silent language within man is beset with fear, darkness and uncertainty, but forgiveness is already present in the silence within. The dark, vegetative nature of the silent language impels the spirit to create the brightness of the truth above the darkness. Every word which is spoken in the brightness of truth comes from the interior darkness. Every word repeats the journey that language first made out of the darkness.

The interior totality of language can also be merely an abyss: then the spirit does not know how to move words out of the abyss; the spirit has difficulty in fetching words up from the abyss.

III

Confronted with a tree man says "That is a tree." As he says this, the tree rises from the thicket of the silent language within; the tree stands above the thicket, an individual tree, a single object which for a moment seems to have been just created. One never sees a tree so clearly as in the moment when man says "That is a tree!" Word and tree are one; it is impossible to say whether the tree has been named or has named itself. For a moment the spoken word is isolated, taken away from the silent, vegetative re-

lationship of the interior language but not yet quite belonging to the object which it is intended to belong to. In this moment of isolation the word seems to have been just created, with the power of the very first word. With this power it embraces the object which it names in the very next moment. Just before this, in the moment when it was isolated, the word was sad; for a moment it yearned to return to the silent language in the depths within, to the dark vagueness of the silent language which forms a rim of sadness round the new word. Only when the word attains the truth by naming the object exactly is the word filled with brightness.

The spoken word detaches itself from the darkness of the silent language and enters the brightness of speech, but underneath it the whole interior language continues to be heard. The darkness has not been abandoned; the spoken word is like an envoy sent out from the silent language within. The words that have not yet been spoken sit like birds on the sea of silence: birds that seem like little waves before they rise above the surface of the sea. The word is sent forwards to the object but also backwards into the silent language from which it has come: it speaks on behalf of the silent language but does not triumph over it. The more the word is accompanied by the interior language on its upward journey, the fuller it will be.

It is the poet who is best able to make the whole interior language audible. The poet sings his soothing song above the darkness of the silent language within: the silent language is not forgotten. In poetry

the spoken and unspoken language can both be heard. The rhythm of the poem is like a sounding ladder on which the words within are drawn up into the light of spoken language. Sadness also comes to man when he has heard a perfect poem: from the depths he has heard the sound of the whole of language, spoken and unspoken, but he has not heard it all actually speaking.

The language of children seems not yet to have been separated from the totality of language. When children speak, the whole of language seems to speak only to sink back again as if no word at all had been spoken. The whole of the silent language within is present in a child's words like a mother. The child has difficulty in speaking because its words bear the whole of language within themselves.

In love there is no separation between the silent language within and the spoken word. Nothing seems to be separate any longer; everything is and seems always to have been whole. Never is the silent language within such a totality as in love in which interior and exterior language are one. The spoken word is like a movement of the silent language, a movement in a dream which awakens the lover and sets the whole dream into the wholeness of the day. And just as the dream and the awakening are a unity, so too are silence and speech.

"When a man speaks to his beloved, she listens more to the silence than to the spoken words of her lover. 'Be silent,' she seems to whisper. 'Be silent, that I may hear thee.' " *

* *The World of Silence.*

IV

"However poor it may be, every language is able to give everything," wrote Leibnitz. "But, even though it is possible to describe anything by circumlocution, longwindedness destroys all pleasure for him who speaks and him who listens; because the mind is detained too long. It is like being held up in every room when being shown over a beautiful palace." It is only when one is unacquainted with the whole of a language—and one often has no grasp of a foreign language as a whole—that one notices verbosity and longwindedness; but the totality of language is in "every room" and prevents one noticing the proximity of the details.

Nietzsche accused Socrates and his disciples of having led philosophy on to byways by the introduction of general ideas and universal concepts as opposed to intuitive, inspirational, poetic philosophy. At that time, however, general ideas and universal concepts were not on their own, were not isolated from the whole of language as they are today. The whole interior language was audible in these general ideas and universal concepts. The antithesis between the philosophy of general ideas and universal concepts and intuitive, poetic philosophy only arose when the philosophy of general ideas broke away from its foundations. Then general ideas and universal concepts soon lost their vitality.

The madman no longer possesses the whole of language: he sends the individual words away from him, ordering them with a shout, as it were to re-

cover for him the wholeness which he has lost. Or he is silent in an unceasing interior silence, as though the wholeness of the interior silence were intended to replace the wholeness of language.

V

Today language has hardly any relationship with the interior language or with silence. It does not even know that it has lost its original wholeness. Words are isolated and specialized and becoming more and more attenuated. They have no depth; they do not reach down into the depths of the silent language. They are always on the surface, one-dimensional. The silent language within no longer has any influence on words; words are impregnated with the verbal noise which replaces the interior wholeness of language.

THE STRUCTURE OF LANGUAGE

I

THE physiognomy of language is apparent when people, whose language one does not understand, are talking. It is like a heap of sounds piled up in front of you, and the people talking seem to be pushed to the edge of the heap, a heap of sounds that is constantly being piled up and constantly vanishing. At first the pile of sounds seems to prevent people coming nearer to one another: it stands between them. They seem gradually, however, to move the heap out of the way and come closer together.

Regarded in this purely external way, as a heap of sounds, language seems to stand between people, almost like an enemy, thrown at them, not originated by them. But through the spirit, man takes possession of the mass of sounds which is waiting to be taken over by the spirit.

In the case of animals, the mass of roaring sound does not stand between them. It is like a physical continuation of the animals, like an organ formed in the air, only bellowing instead of merely moving, like the other animal organs. The roaring of an animal is therefore nearly always more frightening. The animal seems to grow in the act of roaring; the bellowing is weirdly disquieting.

Words exist and yet they do not exist. They are heard one moment and gone the next. Like man himself they emerge only to vanish again. Man and language both need the spirit to give them a continuing presence.

II

In the ancient languages, especially in the Old Testament, there is strenuous effort to cling to words, not to let them go. The nouns are like solid blocks: they represent security and certainty. There is an immense silence below these blocks: the abyss of pre-human silence, not the depth of human silence. Block collides with block. These blocks are so powerful that they would continue speaking of their own accord if man lost his memory of language. Man is nervous about approaching them. The words come out and fetch him themselves.

These blocks still contain the power of the object which they name. These massive substantives are numinous; they have a latent magic of their own. They almost inspire man with dread. Man approaches them cautiously as if the thing described were following on behind. The substantive only really belongs to man when it is activated by means of a predicate. Only then is the substantive really inside man and inside the world. "Man" and "sea" and "house" are brought home to man: the noun is humanized. With the verb man himself assumes responsibility; the object is delivered into his hands and the noun ceases to be strange and magical. Only when the subject is related to a definite object by the verb, however, is

the subject firmly established. The trinity of subject, predicate and object seems to come to an end and a new unity brought into being.

The sentence—subject, predicate and object—is an attempt to pave a way from the massive block of the subject, through the endless silence, towards the menacingly lurking object. A kind of searching in the way of a sentence from subject to predicate and on to the object exists, just as there is an element of searching in every way.

In a sentence in ancient languages there is also an element of hesitation, as though the sentence were nervous of moving forward at the normal speed. It seems to turn back, listening out for criticism or agreement.

In the writings of Jean Paul it is sometimes as though the reader were in an airship, raised high above the path of the sentence, hovering over the sentence below, illuminating it with the sheen of the silver airship.

Dämmerung senkte sich von oben,
Schon ist alle Nähe fern;
Doch zuerst emporgehoben
Holden Lichts der Abendstern!
Alles schwankt ins Ungewisse,
Nebel schleichen in die Höh';
Schwarz vertiefte Fuister nisse
Wiederspiegelnd ruht der See.*

Here, too, subject, predicate and object do not follow one behind the other. Everything is all together, up above, hovering over the road below. The twilight

* Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

of the poem sinks down on all the twilight of the world. It sinks down but it stays above. The nearness is distant and the distance near. The way is always at journey's end.

III

The substantive is leveled down today; man no longer reveres the individual noun as such; it is verbalized from the very outset, drawn into the motion of activity even before a verb has been appended to it. The verb is only valid for a moment; it is no longer conditioned by the subject and no longer conditions it: both are together by pure accident.

It has been said that the greatest and real power of language resides in the verb. Today, subject, verb and object are all powerless; they are all shriveled up together. That is why there exist such words as NATO and UNICEF and so on, words which refer to no object but are merely guides for the memory. The sentence is dominated not by words, subject or verb, but by an amalgam of vowels and consonants.

IV

In long sentences man catches things as if with a lasso, bringing them into the curve of the sentence. In the long sentence there is a wonderful unity of prolixity and conciseness, distance and nearness. Nowhere else are words so at home, so close to one another as in the long sentence where they stretch themselves out and feel secure and comfortable. In the long sentence language is furthest away from mere communication. What it has to communicate is com-

municated incidentally. Man himself is less possessed by expediency; he confronts things more independently thanks to the sovereignty of language. In the long sentence the mind has time to look around: there is a pondering quality in the long sentence and in the time which is gathered into the long sentence there is a reference to the time during which the object came into being: it comes into being all over again. The age in which men wrote long periods was less subjective than our age. Such sentences are not jerky and chopped up and aggressive. They have breadth and move towards a limited objective. Such sentences show the mind struggling out of the vague and undefined into the realm of clarity and definition.

Today language is hard and indiscreet. Words are thrown out abruptly; the sentence no longer leads to anything; there is no time in the sentence; everything is there at once and as though by accident. It is as if the mind had achieved its relationship with the object not by means of language but by something else. A language without time is finished. Today there are no longer any long exploratory paths in language; no nourishing bushes by the wayside, only asphalt commonplaces. And although it is lacking in movement, the sentence is everywhere at once. The old reverence and the old searching are gone.

V

God said: "Do this, hear this!" In the imperative spoken by man there is always a reflection of God's first commandment to man; there is always a slight pause after the word of command in which man not

only waits for the order to be carried out but in which he also waits expectantly for something. Everything seems to stop for a moment. It is the moment in which a reflection of that first divine commandment appears: but only a dim reflection, because it comes up from the deepest depths of the memory.

The imperative is almost a sacred form of language. Just because of that it is the form that has been most drastically secularized. Today the imperative belongs to the imperious dictator who permits no pause between the command and its execution. All trace of the memory of the first divine commandment has been destroyed.

VI

In Chinese or Egyptian picture-writing it is difficult for the sentence to move on from one word to the next since each successive picture holds the attention of the eye and the mind. Words are delimited not only by sound but also by the lines of the picture. The eye slips more easily away from the abstract letter. The speaker as well as the reader is held up by the picture, since the spoken word is also tied to the picture. The vertical is stressed more than the horizontal. A special act is needed to leave the picture of one object and move on to the next.

Humboldt thought that picture-writing was a hindrance to language. "It is obvious that by suggesting the visual appearance of the object, picture-writing must obstruct the activity of language. . . . When the picture is imposed on a written character it involuntarily represses that which it is intended to represent,

the word." But in a picture-conscious world such as the Chinese or Egyptian, picture and object are not opposed to one another: the pictures of the objects are themselves directly in the words and the words do not need to make a long journey to reach them. It is impossible, however, to return to picture-writing now: words themselves must have the power to create the image of the object to which they refer. Humboldt is right: "Language requires concreteness, but fastens it to words which are held fast by sound." That is possible only in a world where everything is still concretely pictorial so that words refer automatically to the corresponding image of the object, which is waiting to be named in sound.

Picture-writing and alphabetic writing both have their dangers: picture-writing tempts man to be seduced by the picture, by the magic of the object; alphabetic writing may tempt him to maneuver with words on their own, unrelated to objects.

VII

"The man fetched the spear" is expressed as follows in the language of a Negro tribe: "The man left the house; reached for the spear and went back again." When a savage decides to fetch a spear a great deal is involved and the involved way in which the action is expressed in his language is quite appropriate. "The man fetched the spear" is abstract. The only word one really hears is "spear": "man" and "fetched" are almost inaudible. In the language of these black men there is time, time for man to think what he is going to do with the spear. There

is a distance between the man and the spear. Part of the tension between Negroes and Europeans is due to the fact that primitive man is used to approaching things slowly, through the barrier of language. When objects are thrown at him he is overwhelmed by them and can no longer find his way about them and about himself.

VIII

The details of a language change but its fundamental structure remains the same, like the spirit which has continuity but is also subject to change in minor ways. Language is not subject to a process of continuous change but to one of changing continuity. Language helps the human spirit to preserve its essential continuity.

Language changes of its own accord as well as under the influence of the human mind. Something quite original and fundamental enters into language from time to time, producing changes. "Language is active in a way that is clearly evident though fundamentally inexplicable," wrote Wilhelm von Humboldt. "Seen from this angle it is not a product of activity but an involuntary emanation of the spirit."

Language adapts itself almost imperceptibly to the changes which take place in the history of the human mind. But the mind of the individual human being can also undergo a sudden and violent change and when that happens, as in the case of St. Paul, language fails to follow suit. The discrepancy between the change that takes place in the spirit and its ability to express the change may be so great that language

does not dare to follow suit. When a great spiritual change occurs, it is often expressed by a mere inarticulate cry or by a silence. The humility of language in the presence of a great spiritual crisis shows how closely language belongs to the spirit.

Are the changes that occur in language not an attempt to return to a state of original wholeness and intactness? Would language have any history at all if the first story, the story of Creation, had not taken place before all else, creating history everywhere, even in language. And may not the sudden mutations which take place in Nature come from a sudden yearning of the limited creature for Wholeness? Does the limited nature in an animal suddenly remember the Whole which lies beyond its own bounds, and strive, leaping out beyond itself, to attain it by means of a mutation?

IX

"Who is able to trace back the expressions for physical things like water, air, earth, fire, bird, animal, herb, grass, to their German roots?" asked Jakob Grimm. Words are divorced from their etymological roots today; they no longer live from their roots. They merely brush past one another, or slide into one another.

Heidegger attempts to understand the true meaning of words by tracing them to their etymological roots. For example, etymologically, the Greek word for truth, *aletheia*, means the revealed, the unhidden.

Like an archaeologist, Heidegger digs down to the roots of words in an attempt to revive their original

and fundamental meaning. To me, however, it seems that what is expressed by the root of a word is merely the word dreaming of itself. Heidegger only lures the word into new associations, false associations from its own past. It does not acquire a new strength and solidity because of these. Words acquire strength and solidity by belonging above all to the object. When word and object are united in a powerful present, the word's past, that is, its etymology, is contained within its present. There is no need to drag it up by its roots to discover its past.

THE MULTIPLICITY OF LANGUAGES

I

THE action of the Creator by which language was created was so tremendous that a single language would not have been able to contain all of it. One sole language would have been exploded by the absoluteness of the action. Man attempts to absorb the whole fullness of that action in the breadth of the multiplicity of languages. "The sum total of what is knowable lies between all languages and independently of them all," wrote Wilhelm von Humboldt. "The original harmony between man and the world which is the basis of the possibility of all knowledge of the truth, is being regained progressively and step by step."

Truth is not the sum-total of the knowledge contained in the various languages. Truth is a primary Unity and its fullness is shared by all the various languages. Truth is so rich that it needs many languages in which to express itself, but the sum of all the various languages does not produce Truth.

At the same time, Jacob of Batnae (*circa* 500 A.D.) was right in questioning whether the confusion of languages was not rather a bountiful gift of grace than a punishment.

It may seem to be, but it is not the case that Truth

is relativized because various languages express various aspects of an object. In every language the object is conditioned by the whole organism and pattern within which the language has its being. The single word is related to the whole organism. The individual aspect of the object acquires truth in and through the total organism of the language of which it is a part. It is true that each language reveals only one aspect of the object but this one aspect receives from the whole of the language more than it contains within itself: the part becomes a whole in and through the language as a totality.

Heidegger traces the concept of Truth to the Greek *aletheia* which means the unhidden. But the German word *wahr* (Latin *versus*) is related to the Old Norse *varar*, meaning *vow* (Var is the goddess of oaths) and the Old High German *vara*, meaning loyalty. These etymological relationships give Truth quite a different meaning from that contained in the Greek *aletheia*, the unhidden. The Greek for Truth does not tell us any more about the nature of Truth than does the concept of "loyalty" contained in the Old Norse. The idea of truth as the "unhidden" is full of truth only in Greek. The whole of a language gives to the individual word that which it is lacking in itself and on its own.

When one is speaking one language it is difficult to remember that other languages exist at all. It is possible to speak various languages without losing one's personal identity only because the language one is speaking at the moment seems the only one it is possible to speak. If this were not so the person who

can speak many languages would be split into as many parts as the number of languages he knows.

The Moassu islanders use different sets of numbers according to whether they are counting people, spirits, animals, or trees. The object in question determines the kind of word used. The object is more important than the number. It is impossible to express oneself abstractly in this kind of language. But thanks to its greater degree of concreteness, it is as closely related to the essential nature of things as the more highly "developed" languages are by abstraction.

HIGH GERMAN AND DIALECT

I

High German is used today to express general concepts and relationships. Dialect is used to express more personal and familiar things. The general now takes up so much space in High German that there is not much room left for the private and familiar. High German is no longer related to dialect. It stands on its own. It has acquired inflationary proportions. But man can only endure a certain degree of the general and universal, even when it is good and true.

It is possible for a wonderful relationship to exist between dialect and the standard language. The person who comes to High German from the homely world of dialect succumbs much less to its standardized, stereotyped routine than those who have always spoken High German and nothing else. For those who come to High German from dialect, High German is always different and distinct and they themselves acquire new strength by engaging with it.

Today dialect is overwhelmed by High German. It is hardly more than a merely quaint appendage to the standard, written language, living as it were in a cellar on its own. And with the displacement of dialect, the private is ceasing to have any validity in language. Dialect is hemmed in, cut off, out of con-

tact with the larger air of the standard language. This is highly dangerous because the general and the public should flow from the particular and the private. Today the general and the public are primary and the particular and the private are mere relics of the past that have not yet been generalized.

Often when I do not understand a passage in Shakespeare I translate it into Alemannic. But the result is *me*, not Shakespeare any longer. Dialect only expresses the personal and the private. In the Alemannic poems of Johann Peter Hebel all the general things that raise man above the level of the merely familiar daily round are lacking, except in two or three poems. But one is not aware that they are missing because the familiar, everyday things are so clear and solid.

One senses that this clarity and solidity are due to the unseen presence of the world of the general, of which the familiar everyday things have knowledge. They are not in fact isolated in a little world on their own, although there is no explicit reference to the wider world above them. Hebel did not, however, allow himself to be tempted by his power of creating the world of the familiar and everyday to use dialect in the prose of the *Schatzkästlein*. That he did not use the dialect of which he was such a master in this work is also a token of his greatness. His story of "The Unexpected Reunion," for example, is one of the most beautiful in the German language. Death and Love, the moment and eternity, fate and the endurance of fate are a perfect unity in this story, shining with the radiance of the first things. In dialect,

however, the story would have fallen from this lofty height to the level of the private anecdote. Two or three people would listen to the dialect speaker telling the story in a lamp-lit corner, whereas, in High German, everyone can hear it, including language itself.

THE DESTRUCTION OF LANGUAGE

I

IN A world in which language is still intact, something happens when man and the object meet. Man embraces the object with his mind, so that the mind may say what the object is, so that it may express the truth of the object. He embraces it with his soul, that the soul may give life and warmth to the truth of the object. The mind gives truth and warmth to the pure sound of the word. But when man ceases to have a true meeting with objects, no special event takes place; there is no true encounter at all. Neither mind nor spirit enters into the word; the word is mindless and soulless; it degenerates into pure sound, into mere verbal noise. Language becomes an everlasting mumble which exists before man begins to speak and continues after he has ceased.

One verbal noise arises from another. Words no longer come from silence. Silence and words are both dissolved in a universal and continuous mumbling. Language ceases to contain anything corresponding to the silence in man, which is in his body, in his sleep, in his death. Language is no longer able to share in the silent nature of man, because it no longer comes from silence.

There is no silence in the world of verbal noise.

Man is mute, but never silent. Verbal noise seems to fill all space but it does not touch the mind and spirit. It touches man only on the purely physical level. Man is the lord of language, but he has become the servant of verbal noise. Language has become a mere acoustic accompaniment to men and things. Language is now only the noise of things, no longer the utterly different which is added to things. Verbal noise is in a state of constant motion and yet always on the same spot. It has the stereotypical movement of the mindless and the mad. It has no before and after, no here and there, no history. Everything is mixed up in verbal noise, everything and nothing: it creates a deceptive and illusory relationship between things.

There is no I and no Thou in verbal noise. Verbal noise is anticonversational. There is no separation between I and Thou. When it tries to extricate itself from the all-confounding mixture, the I inclines to egotism and dictatorship. The I is alone and yet not alone. All the basic categories of human existence are abolished. The certainty of self-identification which man formerly received from his free embrace of language, is replaced by the merely external duration of verbal noise. The inner, spiritual continuity is replaced by a purely external continuity. Man switches on the radio to make certain that he is still an identifiable person; even the certainty of self-identification is mechanized.

The language of verbal noise is pervious to everything. "The earth gives man more self-knowledge than all the books, because it offers resistance to him

and it is only in conflict with forces outside himself that man finds the way to himself," writes Antoine de Saint Exupéry. Language is no longer a resisting force. It is pervious to everything, far too pervious. Man is pervious too: he absorbs Negro sculpture and the animal and plant forms of the ninth-century Irish Codex Cenaniensis, Toulouse-Lautrec and Bavarian folk art, Carpaccio and the moderns, all mixed up together. Man absorbs everything because he has no spiritual continuity. He is no longer committed by anything that comes to him. Everything merely appears and disappears in the verbal noise.

It has been said that it is easier to understand Hölderlin today than it was in the age of Goethe. No, the only difference is that we are more pervious to him as we are to everything else. The frontier that made it impossible for men to understand Hölderlin was a sign and symbol of man. It is no gain to have lost that symbolical frontier. The things beyond that frontier were not without influence on man, however, for they belonged to the objective world which acted on him indirectly and unbeknown to him.

Emil Brunner has said that the Gospel ought to be translated into the language of our own modern age. Barth has also said that it should be translated into the language of the Press. But the power of secular language is so intense today that it would drown the truth of the Gospel if it were translated into "the language of the modern age." The words of the Gospel would become part of the universal verbal noise; they would seem a mere modulation of the verbal noise and no attention would be paid to them

as they appeared only to disappear again. The language of the Gospel would be dissolved. The "language of the age" would not be redeemed, for it seems capable of assimilating anything, even the words of the Gospel. The language of the Gospel can preserve its true nature today more than ever before only by remaining wholly different, by changing man through the impact on him of the wholly different, the magic of the wholly different.

It would be wrong to believe that verbal noise will infect real language altogether. There are possible resources still available which may prevent the complete destruction of language. Some languages are more infected by verbal noise than others. It may be that the danger may become more evident in one particular language and this will act as a warning to others. It sometimes seems, too, as though language still exists unsullied, though deeply buried in a silence that is deeper than the silence of man. Unsullied language still exists in a menacing silence and above it is the verbal noise, a single loud muteness.

Nicht vermögen

Die Himmlischen alles. Nämlich es reichen

Die Sterblichen eh' in den Abgrund. Also wondet es sich

Mit diesen. Lang ist

Die Zeit, es ereignet sich aber

Das Wahre.*

* Johann C. F. Hölderlin.

WORDS AND OBJECTS

I

IN THE language of verbal noise words are merely symbols indicating that an object is flitting past: the nature of the object hardly matters. But man must make some response to the fact that objects exist at all. By calling an object by name he intimates to the Creator that he has received it. That is why man has language at all. Human language is above all an answer to the Creator. Language is the inventory of Creation.

But the poet does more than answer. He not only intimates that he has clearly seen what the Creator created; he also sends the objects back to the Creator on the wings of poetry. Poetry gives a soaring quality to things. The true rhythm of a poem consists in bringing the object to man and at the same time sending it winging back to the Creator.

Objects themselves help words to embrace them. There is a surplus in the object exceeding what is necessary for the thing to be as it is. This surplus in the object waits to meet the surplus in the word. It impels the object to the word. There is a transcendent element in every word, expressing more than the pure factuality of the object.

II

In order that a word may embrace an object there must be an encounter between man and the object. Something definite must take place. When man and the object meet in a true encounter, both are lifted above the level of ordinary existence. For a moment man and the object exist on their own. They return to the beginning of Creation. Today, however, there is no meeting between man and the object. Objects only meet other objects. Man is merely grazed by the object; he scarcely touches it at all. The word is merely a sign that the object has been supplied to him. The encounter is purely mechanical.

Some poets are only successful with their first book of poems. The encounter with objects is still a reality and language echoes the original truth of the experience. When the substance of poetry enters the medium of language for the first time, language trembles from the impact. But often in the very next book of poems the words arrive before the object; they search for the object. Having lost the original substance of poetry they can only offer a reminder of it.

The Fiji islanders use a different word for two coconuts than for ten coconuts. Ten coconuts are not simply eight coconuts plus two. They are something quite different. The encounter between man and the object is so intense that the encounter with two coconuts differs from the encounter with ten. Number expresses a difference in quality as well as in quantity. The change in the number affects the nature of

the encounter, hence a special word is used. The Fiji islander looks from man to the object, that is, from himself to the two coconuts, not from object to object, that is, not from the two coconuts to the ten; the encounter with the object is the thing that matters.

In the Ewe language there are thirty-three different words for thirty-three different kinds of walking. The Javanese have a special word for ten different kinds of standing and twenty different kinds of sitting. The world is experienced in the intensity of a particular situation not in the extensity of many situations. Each different variation of walking is so valid and significant in itself that no other kind seems possible. The only thing that is undeveloped in that kind of language is its flexibility. Its essential nature is not at all undeveloped.

In Tibetan three different words are used according to whether one is speaking to an equal, a servant, or a superior. "If I am asking a person of high rank how he is, I call his body '*cu zu*,' but if I am only talking about myself I call the body '*cu*.' To the servant my hand is '*ciag*,' but to me his hand is '*lag*.'" * The individual encounters are so intensive that every difference is expressed by a different word.

In Greek two people or two things were felt to represent something quite distinct from anything else, so they were given a special form, Dual number. In some native African languages too a special form is accorded to certain multiples, for example, sixes or sevens. There is felt to be something peculiarly significant about the meeting of six or seven people or

* Giuseppe Tucci, *Nach Lhasa und weiter*.

things so a special word is used to describe such a meeting.

Some African languages only have the present tense. Future and past are simply the non-present and are not differentiated from one another. The immediate encounter with the object is so powerful that it is impossible to imagine any tense but the present as having independent validity.

On the other hand, a word formation such as "blooming nonsense" is possible only when word and object have ceased to be closely related to one another. Only then can "blooming" be taken away from the flower to which it belongs and transferred to "nonsense."

I do not mean that our more dynamic languages should return to the more static condition of primitive languages. I do mean, however, that we should not use our dynamic languages to get rid of things before they have come into contact with us at all. The encounter with the object should be more powerful than the dynamism of language which tends to ignore the object altogether. The dynamism should not be all-important. It should only be the means leading to the encounter with the object, as in this poem by Georg Trakl:

Verklärter Herbst

Gewaltig endet so das Jahr
Mit goldnem Wein und Frucht der Gärten.
Rund schweigen Wälder wunderbar
Und sind des Einsamen Gefährten.
Da sagt der Landmann: Es ist gut.
Ihr Abendglocken lang und leise

Gebt noch zum Ende frohen Mut.
Ein Vogelzug grüsst auf der Reise.

Es ist der Liebe milde Zeit,
Im Kahn den blauen Fluss hinunter
Wie schön sich Bild an Bildchen reiht—
Das geht in Ruh und Schweigen unter.

In spite of the mobility of the language, in spite of the images which come and go in all directions, the autumn is clearly present in this poem. The autumn of all autumns sojourns in this poem. It existed before the creation of any earthly autumn and will sing its way through all the autumns to come, long after the earth itself has gone. The object, in this case, autumn, exists by means of words. When the word is the object, the word seems like a blessed overflow: the object exists but through the word it exists all over again. In this overflow, language is released from the necessity of embracing the object: it is free and therefore beautiful. Whenever a word succeeds in expressing the object completely, man is both happy and sad. The yearning for the Wholeness that man has lost is present in language.

The object is brought into existence by the poem, and at the same time it is at the source from which word and object both came; the darkness of the beginning and the clarity of the present are a unity. It is like the mosaics in the portico of St. Mark's in Venice. Noah's Ark, the Flood, the people and animals in the Flood and in the Ark, are all there as if they were really there at this very moment, and yet the gold behind the figures reflects the light of the beginning in which the Flood and the Ark first

existed, in the radiance of the gold the beginning and the present are connected and, because of this, what happened once will never cease to happen.

III

It is language that first gives existence to things. The object grows and increases through the word; it therefore waits for the word. Objects crowd in on man, clamoring to be named by him. There is a competition among them to be noticed and named by man.

Words themselves need objects. They are sustained and protected by objects. The word that is bound up with a particular object cannot easily be taken away by another word and attached to another object. Words exist because they are held fast by objects. The whole of language exists and man is in possession of language even when it is not being spoken because the objects continue to speak in the silence.

In the Old Testament the words are absorbed by the objects. The objects themselves speak to us and so directly that it seems as though they might well be able to speak without words. The words are often mere protective cloaks and sometimes they are stripped away by the winds of God and we see the object naked. It is as though the encounter between word and object had only just taken place. The words are still quivering from their collision with the objects.

Without words man would not be able to endure the divine awfulness of things and happenings. They soften the impact and nowhere is the kindly gift of language so evident as here, in the Old Testament.

Behind the words one senses the menacing solitariness of the things created by God which have not yet been reached by words.

In the beginning man was awe-struck by the immediate object. He did not trust himself to move away from the object into abstraction. There are words in the Old Testament which are like things transformed into words, which are waiting to become mere things again, just as the stone birds on cathedral walls seem to be waiting to break through the stone and fly out into the air.

The more directly language arises from silence, from the primacy of silence, the more possible it is that for a moment at least the state of incipience will be created in which word and thing are absolutely one. There is perhaps in intuition (which Bergson called "the deep I") a reflection of the perfect unity of word and object. As soon as man tries, however, to clarify his intuition he creates a gap between word and object which can only be filled by the spirit of truth.

Probably the word often does not embrace the whole of the object, but only part of it, so that love may arise: through love that which is merely a part is made the whole. But where word and object are a unity, love does not need only to come and heal the breach between them; it comes as love entire.

The word which does not embrace the whole of the object can also point the way to a future unity of word and object towards which the word leaves the object free to move.

IV

Someone wrote to me to say that if the object were wholly contained in the word, merely saying the word "fire" would burn one's tongue. No—when the word "fire" is spoken in a poem you can see the fire burning brightly, you can even feel it burning on your tongue, but it does not actually burn your tongue: it shines and glows with a flame that has no power to destroy. The fire burns nothing and burns eternally. Language first turns the fire into a fire. Before the arrival of language, it was merely something burning, something with power to destroy man, threatening and overpowering him (hence the effect of fire on the insane who lack the *logos* of language). Through language, fire is tamed, it glows in the word "fire." It is kindled by the "F"; in the "i" it spreads out in a roundish shape and in the final "re" it falls back a little. By means of the word "fire" the burning of the fire is brought under control. The menacing magic continues to burn behind the word, under the "fire."

V

Words are without their objects today and a poem cannot be explained by reference to the objects which are mentioned in it; other words have to be used to explain the content of the poem. The modern poet hardly ever has possession of the object: he only possesses the word. In Kafka there is still a space in which the object may be presumed to exist: a subterranean space in the echo of which it is almost possible to hear

people speaking and things moving. At the beginning of Creation things existed without words: today words exist without things.

The external world of things, firmly related to words, preserves words for man when he himself has already lost them. It watches over words on his behalf. The external world of things protects language, just as language protects the external world. If this were not so, man would never stop talking, for fear of losing the gift of language. When the object is taken away from the word, it becomes a mere token, flitting swiftly by, replaceable by anything else that flits swiftly by.

When the object is divorced from the word, it falls back on itself and becomes as it wishes to be, not as man intends it to be. The objects which have become divorced from human language, now speak through themselves, and grow increasingly since they are no longer held in check by the word and its controlling and restraining power.

The reason why things like factories or cities attain such exorbitant proportions nowadays is that they are beyond the control of language. In a factory, the walls of the machine rooms are not like the ends of a room but like doors which lead to more and more rooms. In the vast new cities the whole development seems to be beyond human control. In his bewilderment man tries to keep up with the movement of the stones, and he sometimes tries to show, with cars in the streets and airplanes above them, that he can move even more rapidly than the stones.

America and Russia: man lacks the words to de-

scribe the nature of these two colossi and that is why they are both continually increasing in size. They speak in the language of quantitative expansion. There is a super-human and super-physical element in their expansion; the Tremendum of the divine has been replaced by the pseudo-Tremendum of the colossal.

This is the revolt of the real masses, the revolt of things no longer protected by language. This is the menacing revolt not of men but of the things which have not been reached by human language.

VI

Words embrace objects but they also are embraced by objects. Man not only looks at things; he is himself looked at by them. They look at him first, before he looks at them. Language is man's response to the questioning gaze of things. When he answers things, man ceases to be an eternal questioner. With his answer, man gently closes the questioning eyes of things.

"Asking questions is the piety of thinking," wrote Heidegger. Questioning is also the piety of things and answering is the piety of man. Today, language no longer responds to the questioning gaze of things; it only asks questions. Today, even affirmations are merely questions held in abeyance.

In the questioning gaze of things there is a reflection of the eyes of God, questioning man. In this respect, things stand proxy for God, questioning man on His behalf.

The Logos which is in the world, in the object,

helps man to think as well as the logos which he has in his own mind. The object thinks with him. Though subject to him, it is with him. The object helps him to think.

VII

Man embraces the object with his mind and, as he embraces it, he names it; something of the very nature of the object is imparted to the name. "Of Jacob Böhme it was said by his biographer and friend, who was a learned doctor, that he, Böhme, had always been able by a kind of spiritual clairvoyance to discern the correct and appropriate name of things, such as plants, from the wrong names which might have been given to him intentionally or in error. . . . However one tries to explain this story, it is certain that the names of things are related much more deeply and fundamentally to their intrinsic qualities than is usually assumed." *

The nature of the object becomes part of the very texture of the word. The sound, the letters of the word are the object's face. They are the relief on which the nature of the object has been impressed. That is why it is wrong to alter the spelling of a word on grounds of expediency.

Cratylus, whom you see here, Socrates, says that everything has a right name of its own, which comes by nature, and that a name is not whatever people call a thing by agreement, just a piece of their own voice applied to the thing, but that there is a kind of inherent

* G. H. Schubert, *History of the Soul*.

correctness in names, which is the same for all men both Greeks and barbarians.*

Something of the object is taken into the word and therefore when he speaks man is related to the object because something of it is contained in the word.

What is frightening is the reduction of language to pure sound: a reduction which is only a symptom of a universal reduction of all human phenomena today. It is as though some central authority were draining off the substance from all human phenomena. They are all succumbing to the same kind of progressive impoverishment.

VIII

The way in which an object is named is determined by what Friso Melzer calls the "heart and soul" of a language. The heart and soul of a language is born when the inner and outer world of a people is brought before God. The moment of eternity for the language of a people is when the heart and soul of the language is created, and it will remain such so long as the people allow it to be determined by that first decision. The heart and soul of a language is present everywhere but impossible to grasp and comprehend. Though it is near to every word, it is nearer to some than others and not completely in any one.

In Greek the word for month is *maen* or that which measures (moon comes from the same root), but in Latin month is *luna* or that which shines as well as *mensis*. The description is not entirely relative because in one language the moon is that which meas-

* Plato, *Cratylus*.

ures and in another that which shines. "*Luna*" is not less expressive than "*maen*": the spirit of the Roman order and of the Latin language determined that the moon should be that which shines, but since this quality of shining was related to the whole order of things and words, the shining of the moon shares in everything that happens within the whole order and "*luna*," the shining one, also has knowledge of that which measures. "*Luna*," the shining one, beams on everything under it, including the place where it is, that which measures. But "*maen*," that which measures, also measures the shining moonbeams and thus that which shines is also present in that which measures. No word is poor and meager that is determined by the heart and soul of a language and of a whole order of being. The heart and soul of language, which nourishes all words, must be preserved in order that the individual word may retain its true nature.

If the heart of the language is sound, the word "interior" will suggest the interior of the soul or the interior of a cathedral, and the two meanings will merge into one another. The word will only suggest the "vagina" when the heart of the language has been corrupted, and "interior" suggests anything vague, dark and roomlike.

Anyone who suddenly sees a rock towering up in front of him on a plain is frightened by the solitariness of the rock in the midst of the plain and the sky above it, but it will not occur to him, as it will to the psychoanalyst, to think of the towering rock as the phallus. Love impels him to stay with the solitary

rock and not let his mind wander to extraneous associations.

It appears that the uppermost meaning of the words in this case, "the interior of the soul" and the "towering rock" of solitude are abundantly clear so that the lower strata of the words may share in this brightness. The dark strata aspire to the bright stratum of their own accord. But psychoanalysis makes the dark lower strata artificially bright and darkens the upper strata.

When the dove of Aphrodite had almost triumphed, when there was a danger that she might become the dove, the dove of God climbed higher and became the Holy Spirit. It was as though the dove that accompanied Aphrodite had been absorbed into the brightness where the dove of the Holy Spirit has its being, and as though it had only been waiting to be there.

LANGUAGE AND ACTION

I

THE word that is still intact contains a surplus over and above the word itself which comes from its divine origin. This surplus strives to be realized in action. In the action that comes from such words, there is a fullness which is not contained in the action that derives from words which are mere utilitarian tokens. The action is more spontaneous, more creative and is yet held fast by the surplus. It always knows where it is coming from; it moves hesitantly, turning back to the word it derives from, since it is more related to the word from which it has arisen than to the action or event that proceeds from it. The action is encompassed by the surplus in the word, and protected by it.

In animals actions are not brought about by a special act, as in man. Action is an integral part of their whole nature. The animal is not augmented or diminished by an action, there is no more and no less in the world as a result of animal actions. The butterfly flies even when it is not flying. Flying is a primary and integral part of its whole make up.

II

Just as there is a knowledge before all language, so there is an action before all language: to be attacked

and to defend oneself, to suffer pain and to groan in agony, to be hungry and to eat are all contained in a primary unity. Man is separated by language from the creatures that do not possess language, but through the actions that come about without the help of language, man is connected with the animals: these are instinctive actions and in them there is no discrepancy between word and action: they have a unifying power. They exist permanently in man, even when they are not actually consummated in real life. There is in man a sphere where no discrepancy exists between words and actions. A man in whom instinctive actions have not become atrophied does not present a problem to himself and to others even when words and actions do not coincide absolutely. Instinctive actions are a reminder of the paradisiac state in which there was no discrepancy between words and actions. It is true that, like other kinds of action, instinctive actions occur in time, but time is present as it were merely by accident. It seems that there is a unity between the beginning and the end of the instinctive action not because the instinctive action takes place very quickly but because it takes place as it were outside the normal flow of time. It seems to belong to the *one* time in which neither past nor future exists but only one single present.

In the sphere of instinctive action space also seems to be a single, undivided space: when the birds fly to Egypt in the autumn, at bottom Egypt is already inside them. Egypt and the land they are leaving are a unity for them, they live in a single space and a single time whether they are in Europe or Egypt.

They are already in Egypt when they set out on their journey. They have Egypt inside themselves: they fly as it were within themselves. Similarly, in all instinctive actions time and space exist in a single undivided unity. The swiftness of an instinctive action is both a frightening and an inspiring memory of Paradise.

III

If the "surplus" is lacking, a word becomes a mere symbol, replaceable by another symbol. The action which is initiated by words that have become mere symbols is sterile and mechanical. It does more, and not only more than man intends it to do but more than it intends to do itself. It becomes unlimited and independent even of the symbol which initiated it. It seeks for itself since it has not been sought by the word. One action waits for another; one action is followed by another and follows another; one action produces another. This is what led to the boundlessness of technics. The boundlessness of technics derives from a language in which words have been reduced to mere phonetic symbols. "The good order of the world depends on the discipline of language," said Confucius. A correspondence exists between language which has no depth and no background, between the superficiality of the verbal symbol and the superficiality of boundless technics, which has nothing behind it and which is entirely functional. The way from the unilinear word-symbol leads directly to the unilinear action and unilinear technics. Words no

longer form a heaven above the action below them, they merely initiate the action and they are almost inside it, part of it, from the very start.

“Language must be replaced by a more direct and more effective form of action, by a kind of direct action, taking place without a medium, and surrendering nothing of the unrest from which it derives.” (Sartre has made the following fine comment on this statement by Price Parain: “We have here arrived at the frontier of human nature, we have attained the extreme degree of tension which arises when man tries to see himself, as though he were a non-human spectator of himself.”)

The surprising quality in an action no longer comes from the surplus that is contained in language, it is only a pseudo-surprising quality, arising from the complications and combinations of technics, from the boundlessness and excessiveness of technics, not from the fullness of the surplus, but from the poverty which seeks out surprises by experimenting with the boundless possibilities of technics.

Actions are no longer ordered by man: he is ordered by them. He experiences himself through actions, but only as the material of actions that have now become autonomous. Here is one of the bases of Heidegger's philosophy as expressed in the following statement: “The nature of man is determined by Being.” Man who is no longer determined by language, now allows himself to be determined by Being.

Action is primary, language only the atmospheric in the background. Language no longer produces

actions. Language is itself one of the by-products of action. Consequently, man is losing the human structure.

Language is more dynamic than static today; it has been motorized. Language makes man more dynamic than he wants to be or than he ought to be. He is controlled by the dynamics of language. The passive word, the word at rest, is merely a pause before the next dynamic, active word. The passive has lost its foothold in man. It needs a basis of silence and silence is absent today in language and in man. Silence and quiet, undynamic words are left for children to play with.

IV

When man no longer has language for actions, actions begin to speak themselves, as action pure and simple. Bombing raids, cities ablaze, thousands of workers marching in columns to their factories as though they are about to occupy the whole earth, for there is no difference between the darkness of the earth and the darkness of the marching columns. Revolutions to come are anticipated in these columns, though no word is spoken; the people in the streets seem to be the vanguard of a type of human being which has broken through from below, from the depths of the earth and which has torn gaps between the rows of houses; the menacing fire that rises at night from factory chimneys is not the beginning but the end of the burning heaven and the burning earth—all these things are actions without words.

But even pure action is not entirely without a yearning for something more: even in mute action there is an unrest and an expectancy: a hope that the creative and ordering word may fall even into pure action.

Intro.

TIME AND SPACE IN LANGUAGE

It is language that first gives man actuality. Before the coming of language time was indefinite, a constant transition from past to present and future. Language creates such an intensive present that only the present seems ever to have existed; past and future are as it were absorbed by the power of the present.

Language itself was veiled until it was revealed in the present. Language comes to itself in the present. But not every word wants to be actual; often some remain veiled: the veiling is a promise of future revelation and actuality.

A sentence runs its course in time, is spoken in and with time, but it exists in a single moment, independently of the fact that it takes time for it to run its course.

"A great barge is about to be here on the canal," says Goethe: you can see the boat slowly approaching, anything can happen in this slow-moving journey. The boat can stop or turn round, or turn into another branch of the canal—and then, all of a sudden, it stands large as life in front of you. As it stands there, the boat also contains the whole journey that it has made to reach this point, the far horizon where sky meets the sea; the distant place where sky and

sea will separate again and where the boat will disappear between them. Present, past and future, each exists on its own but they are all together, each taking its own separate course but also present in an undivided unity—a unity created by the spirit at work in language, which is also subject to the process of time, but stands above it. For a moment the unity of paradise is restored.

In undivided time the spirit does not need to reconstruct itself from the pieces of broken time, it possesses itself as an undivided whole. Time itself longs for the wholeness of the spirit which can bring it fulfilment.

Man moves away from undivided time and then moves back to it: he is centered in undivided time. Divided time, chronological time, moves like the hand of a clock round undivided time.

Undivided time is the time of the spirit; it is the opposite of chronological time. Chronological time is a waiting for the time that is whole, undivided and fulfilled. Lost in chronological time, man divides it up and measures it, as one who waits. The measuring of time is fundamentally the measuring of the distance from whole time, a ceaseless, futile measuring.

Today chronological time hastens swiftly on as if it wanted to reach its end.

Love exists outside divided time and that is why lovers do not notice the passing of time. They create time, for in the undivided time of love there is more time than they themselves can use.

Words which contain the spirit also create space; language marks out, demarcates, the infinities of

space. And just as there is spiritual time, so too there is spiritual space, which contains the far and near in an undivided unity. Lovers live in this spiritual space; they are close to one another and never near enough, always far away, however near.

In poetry the distant is brought near in every moment and the near hovers in the distance. The poem seems to be both here, in the immediate present, and at the same time, everywhere.

Verbal noise, language that has abandoned the spirit, is no longer able to demarcate the world of space and it has no desire to do so. It is everywhere: it grows in all directions by mere accumulation. Real language exists in and through the spirit. Verbal noise is a demonic imitation of the ubiquity of the spirit and therefore has no present and no past or future. All three are mixed up together in an undifferentiated muddle. Time is excluded from and crushed by verbal noise.

All that exists is space entirely filled with verbal noise: in other words, space itself no longer exists, but has become merely something filled with verbal noise where space really should be.

Time is excluded—and love is excluded. Time and love belong to one another. The word must give itself time to embrace the object. Only then will the time be revealed which the object took to grow and in which it still has its being. Only then will the object come to itself and belong to itself. To give an object time is to give it being and love. Where there is no love, there are no objects.

Time is being expelled from language, so that man will no longer be reminded of love; or rather, man no longer has love, and therefore he is expelling time from language. A world without love is creating for itself a language without time.

LANGUAGE AND THE HUMAN FORM

I

UNLIKE the animal's face, the human face is no mere continuation of the rest of the body. It has not come from below, finally reaching its destination on top of the body but has been, as it were, set down from above. The body comes to a full stop here, there can only be a completely new beginning. Language is the new beginning.

Just as the human face comes as a sudden surprise on top of the body, so too does language: it comes unexpectedly, surprisingly—the surprise only lasts for a moment for one immediately realizes that the human face is the only thing possible on top of the body, and language is the only thing possible that can come out of the human face. The reaction of surprise followed by the immediate realization that this is the only possibility is man's reaction to a phenomenon brought about by the direct act of the Creator.

In early Greek sculpture the parts of the human body were not yet clearly articulated. Compared with the human face from which language arose, the whole of the rest of the body seemed like a single piece. All differences between the various parts of the body were as nothing compared with the human face,

whence the Logos came and where it was enthroned. The body was like a single, homogeneous column, which existed merely to support the place of language.

The architecture of the human body and the architecture of human languages correspond to one another. In animals the body is usually less divided, a more cohesive mass, the parts are more wrapped up in themselves, more self-embracing; in the human body every part is free, belonging to itself, and yet related, in freedom, to the other parts. The more unarticulated animal body matches the animal's unarticulated sounds. Birdsong, on the other hand, corresponds to the bird's ball-like body which, like its song, is everywhere in the air.

II

Language is only intact when a particular part of the brain, the speech center, is intact; this does not mean that the law of language is determined by this center, only that in the speech center of the brain language and the body are connected. Language is free in itself, as though this connection with the body did not exist, and that is of great importance. But the body wants to share the life of the mind and something urges it to participate in language which raises man right above the physical. The fact that the speech center is circumscribed shows that this connection between body and language is intended to be a firm one.

The convolutions of the speech center in the brain are like the stamp on the seal, showing that here, in this place, body and language are meant to be to-

gether. Language is the commitment, the connection, the approximation of one human being to another and the approach of things to man. Once the seal of unity is destroyed in the brain, the very essence of language is destroyed. When that happens a man will, for example, no longer be able to speak, but he will still be able to understand words; or he will be able to pronounce words but will relate them to things to which they do not pertain; or he will be able to write, but not to speak. Once the seal of unity has been broken, language is disintegrated.

The mind would be able to form the body even without the unity which connects all the activities of language, but thanks to this unity, the formation takes place constantly and naturally. Without the unity of the mental and physical the mind would become too autonomous and forget that it does not belong to itself. And through its opposition to the body with which it is related, the mind becomes aware of itself and is nevertheless protected from the dangers of absolute sovereignty.

III

Man is upright—the suddenness and decisiveness of the act by which man was made to stand erect is present in the solitary vertical line of the human form. The movement by which this vertical was created is in the solitariness and seclusion of the upright figure.

The decisiveness with which language breaks through silence and the decisiveness of the vertical in the human form correspond to one another. Man keeps

to the vertical by means of language, the word of truth draws man upwards, to the Logos: the uprightness of the body is confirmed by language. This vertical is the grace from below which man can give to himself, it goes out to meet the vertical from above.

The liar is crooked and bent, he writhes and creeps. The liar falls out of the vertical.

The decisiveness of language, the circumscribed nature of the decision, also forms the face. The circumscribed act of decision and the circumscribed form of the face belong to one another.

Animal sounds are vague, extending like a dark fog along the surface of the earth. The equine bodies of the centaurs and the leonine bodies of the Egyptian sphinxes with their human faces above their animal bodies suggest that animals have an urge to be like man, who possesses language, to be with him and in him, near the place where language is spoken.

When language ceases to be of the spirit and becomes purely symbolic, man still stands erect not because the spirit in him still summons him to stand upright, but merely because it once summoned him. The man who no longer has the language that keeps him in the vertical position, corresponds to the man who speeds away horizontally in a car or on a motorcycle. Language that has been degraded to mere verbal noise and the flight of the human form as it rushes by in a car or on a motorcycle, belong to one another, they are mixed up together. The noise of the motor drowns out the noise of language. No word is capable of stopping this scurrying noise of car and motorcycle—only a signal or a whistle.

The Word which called man from the horizontal to the vertical has not gone, however. It hovers over the human form and holds it in position. Man is held erect by the invisible net of the Word that hovers over him. Even today man moves alongside this first Word. He speaks alongside it, he is surrounded by its sound.

IV

A silent man has the dignity of one who has a lofty mission; the silence reaches out beyond the man himself and gives him dignity.

If silence did not exist, man would be restless until he had spoken: silence, however, carries the word to its goal for him.

Silence is not the darkness of night, but the radiance of night preparing for the light of language, resting before the arrival of language.

Silence helps to shape the human body. The silence and the repose in the human form are connected. Words that are no longer related to silence, not only take themselves away from themselves, they also take man away from himself. He loses his connection with his own silent form. Man is isolated from himself and divided within himself—and here is another reason for the increasing schizophrenia of our time.

In the silent image of the face there still exists something of that first moment in which man waited, before the arrival of his first word, and did not dare to release the word. There is a trace of that fear in every silence: it gives depth to the silence; it reaches back to the beginning.

Without language the human form would be like the magic token of an invisible magic; it would move like a machine directed from afar. Language makes the human form autonomous, self-directing. The animals who lack language seem like beings controlled by the earth or stars; and the man who forgoes the spirit also seems to be controlled from afar by demonic powers.

The silent man seems to be more powerful than the speaking man; silence seems more powerful than language; but silence has this power only because it is from silence that language comes, because it contains language.

When man speaks, his whole form suddenly becomes the border that surrounds language. He surrounds language with his form and everything that was mere appearance in his form becomes a reality. The human form seems to be listening silently like the person who is spoken to. Through language the human form is firmly established, like a stake in the ground.

Where the human form is firmly established by language, man remains. There he builds a house to live in. House and language belong to one another. Outside in the open air the human form is like air which has congealed round language but in the house the human form is on its own again and now the walls of the house hold language in.

LANGUAGE AND THE VOICE

I

THE sound of a voice seems to have its beginning long before the beginning of man himself. It becomes audible where man is and it seems to continue after he is gone.

"The sound with which a human soul was torn away from eternity so that it might achieve actuality, this sound echoes in the voice, it gives to the voice its particular unmistakable timbre." ("The Human Face")

It is easier to recognize a person by his voice than by his face. The voice is less altered by external influences than the face; it is less subject to the influence of other people and the human environment in general. During a lifetime it may lose its clarity and brightness; the tone may be broken; but the specifically personal quality of the voice is never changed.

"When Titon implored Jupiter to bestow immortality on him he did not include youth in his petition and he finally dwindled into an immortal voice," wrote Jean Paul.

A person is immediately recognizable by his voice and it also reveals his character. It is more difficult to tell a person's character from his face. The voice is a more direct token of character.

The voice is personal: it reveals the person. At the same time, however, it is objective since it is bound up with the person's family history. The unchangeableness of the voice is due to this extra-personal, objective quality. It is a sign that there is something immutable and enduring beyond the span of a single human life.

When two people are talking to one another, the words they hear are constantly changing, but the voices never change. This gives the speakers assurance and the certainty of the existence of something immutable. The timbre of the voice seems to protect the words.

The voice comes from far away and goes to distant places, but language of which it is the vehicle gives the distance actuality. The truth which man puts into words gives to the voice something of the truth from which man was torn away at his beginning; therefore joy exists in the voice when the words it utters give truth actuality. The voice rejoices.

The timbre of the voice which comes from man's beginning, and the silence that lies behind words, belong together. In the timbre of the voice the silence can be heard; the timbre of the voice creates a longing for silence and for that which lies beyond the beginning of man, but at the same time the timbre of the voice creates a longing for words.

By reason of its timbre, the voice belongs to the eternal and objective world from which it came and by reason of the language of which it is the vehicle, it is in the world. The voice is a compound of the objective and the subjective. The eternal and the

worldly are both contained in the voice. The voice reveals a man's basic nature and capacity; the words he speaks reveal what he has made of his basic capacity.

One cannot only hear the voice of another person; one can also see it in his face. The voice can be heard in the silence of a person's face. The face belongs to the voice and to its silence.

On the telephone voices exist on their own. On the telephone man becomes a mere voice. "Whenever my grandmother spoke to me I followed what she said in the open score of her face in which the eyes took up much space—but I heard her voice on the telephone for the first time today and the voice seemed different and all on its own. It came divorced from the features of her face and I discovered how exceedingly gentle it was." *

But was that her real voice? The real voice is the one we see along with the face, in the face, since the voice is not given to man on its own but in relation to the whole person, and it can only be fully expressed within this total relationship. The voice on the telephone is abstract, in the true sense of the word, separated, abstracted from the Whole of which it forms a part.

II

A conflict may possibly arise between the objectivity of the voice and the subjectivity of the human mind as expressed in language. A shrieking voice is the result of excessive subjectivity. The shrieking voice

* Marcel Proust, *The Duchess of Guermantes*

of the dictator is an attempt to destroy the voice and the objectivity which it represents. The liar speaks softly to hide his voice or screams to suppress the objective world from which it comes. The more a man lies in the course of his life, the greater will be the conflict between voice and language. Language becomes empty, but a second emptiness is also created by the discrepancy between the lies and the voice which comes from the eternal world and has to bear the burden of the lies.

The voices of prostitutes and madmen do not seem to have a continuous existence. It seems as if the sound is manufactured afresh for every word, as though prostitutes and madmen were trying to destroy language itself as well as the human voice.

Language and the voice are not equally expressive of the nature of a person. The discrepancy between voice and language originated in the Fall: language which brought about the Fall was dragged down deeper than the voice which is the vehicle of language. The voice is constantly related to the eternal world from which it has come. Language is related to that world only by a special act of the spirit.

Man often tries to overcome the discrepancy by means of the chatter in which there is no difference between voice and language, in which both become a single verbal noise.

Words have difficulty in emerging from the voice of children. It seems that the child's words may disappear at any moment and return with the voice to the eternal world where the voice has its home.

In some people the voice seems to arise from the

ground which is its ultimate source. Other voices seem to have no awareness of the source from which they come. They seem to know only about themselves.

In God the voice is the Word itself. The Voice of God is also the Word of God.

On the radio the voice is hardly anything more than a purely phonetic phenomenon. There is still a difference between the various voices that are heard on the radio, but it is only a semantic difference. We do not hear the voice which has made the journey from eternity to man. We only hear the voice that has made the journey from the radio set to the listener. The radio voice is only the mechanical vehicle which pulls the words along. That is why words heard on the radio never make the same impact as the words spoken by a person who is actually present.

Is not music an attempt to lead the sounds of all voices back to the beginning whence came the sound of the first human voice? In music the human voice seems to be taken away from man and led back to the beginning and to be returning from the beginning as man waits in silence for it to come back to him.

LANGUAGE AND PICTURES

I

THE position of the picture is between silence and language. It influences both silence and language. In the circumscribed picture, silence is circumscribed: it becomes an active silence. Outside the picture, the object is made uneasy by the proximity of other objects, uneasy in its silence. But in the picture the silence is eloquent and assured.

Pictures also have an effect on language. In front of a picture man is silent; words are, as it were, absorbed by the picture: they seem to return to silence. "And so one day all our dreams about eternity will be destroyed by eternity itself," says Jean Paul. Thus language is destroyed by pictures. When man stands in front of a picture, it seems as though he loses language for a moment, but it returns in the very next moment as though it had just escaped from the picture. The silent picture imparts its silence to language. It redeems language from absolute unrestraint. It holds language in check. Pictures are able to prevent man from entering into that which is legitimately hidden. The silence of pictures is not a weakness since silence is the mother of language.

In the presence of pictures language rests and recuperates. There is an urge in man to contemplate

silent pictures, in memory of the paradisaical state before language brought about the Fall. Man's earliest beginnings are stimulated by pictures. Silent pictures have the power to excite and surprise man.

In abstract art language is not absorbed into the picture but merely pushed away. Abstract art lacks the silence of the true picture; it only has the muteness of the abstract stroke.

II

Once when the world was more picture-like than it is today and cities, buildings, human gestures and ways of life were more circumscribed and therefore more picture-like, people's attitude toward pictures and the pictorial was a perfectly natural one. Pictures were less obtrusive than they are today; they were simply the condensation of the pictures that existed everywhere. They were taken for granted because they seemed to have been painted by the picture-creating force that appeared to inspire all life. The painted pictures were the origin of a thousand other unpainted pictures. Pictures created pictures. It was an autonomous world of pictures. Pictures were everywhere, and when man came to sleep, pictures went before him in his dreams.

Pictures looked at man more than he looked at them. The eyes of the pictures looked at man, and man cast his eyes down before them; by being looked at by pictures man himself learned how to look and how to be silent. Above all, he learned to speak, for it was not easy to speak in this silent world of pictures. A special act was needed to fetch words out

of silence. Words were deeply significant because they could only be brought into being in opposition to silence. Words had to defend themselves against pictures. Words had to be utterly true. Truth endowed them with an existence of their own. Words were less in danger than they are today of falling into mere routine since they had constantly to be asserting themselves against pictures.

III

In a world thus determined by pictures, language too was full of pictures. It was turned towards the object, encircling the object and bringing to it that which properly belongs to it. Concrete pictorial language is static. The picture of the object precedes the word so that man has time, on the way from the picture to the word, to ponder the word and this saves him from rushing from one word to the next.

Poets have such a wealth of images that they need the realm of night and sleep and dreams to make room for them.

In the poetic comparison, related things are brought together. The comparison makes things clearer than they were before on their own. Competition exists among things to be made clear through the image. The power of the image gives things the strength of the beginning of things.

The language of Christ was not poetic and concrete for the sake of the poetry. By naming things Christ enhanced them and made them poetic in themselves.

The soul of the child is full of images and this explains its timidity. It fears the fall from the silent

picture into language. In the poet this fear alternates with the Hybris which impels him to drop defiantly from the silent picture into the dangerous realm of words and to take the picture with him into the danger zone.

The word that is in the poet's image must have its center in the Original Word from which it comes. Just as the painted picture refers back silently to the Original Picture, so the word refers back to the Original Word which is word and picture in one.

If the word is not centered in the Original Word, the image will be all too vague. The images will flow past merely for the sake of flowing past. (Compare the images in the language of Jean Giono which not merely follow but pursue one another.)

IV

Pictures would not exist without language. Children only begin to draw when they are already capable of expressing themselves in words.* It is only through language that pictures learn there is an Original Picture toward which they are striving and which shines through all pictures. Pictures are a world on their own but they also wait for language. They sense the heaven of language above them. Pictures need language because it is only through language that they know they belong to the Original Picture. Pictures seek for man, for man gives the object time, that is, love. In love the object becomes an image of its own beginning.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty is wrong when he says that

* K. Bühler, *The Intellectual Development of the Child*.

painting and language are merely two different modes of expression. Language is in fact superior to painting, for when language loses its true nature, painting and pictorial art generally lose their true nature too. It is language that makes the pictorial arts autonomous. When language is destroyed, pictorial art becomes abstract, reduced to abstract strokes in the same way that words are reduced to mere sounds.

V

Pictures are sometimes capable of overwhelming man more than words. They can have a magical effect on him; they can transform him without his noticing it. According to Socrates, virtue can be taught, but when it has molded the whole interior and exterior being of a person in the form of and by means of a picture, it does not need to be taught. Pictures could change man for good or evil if man had no power of choice, no capacity for resisting the influences which are ready to mold him. The capacity for decision is part of man's essential nature. For that reason too words are greater than pictures. Klopstock wrote:

Es erreicht die Farbe dich nicht, des Marmors
teilbare Last, Gottin Sprache, Dich nicht!
Nur Weniges bilden sie un
und es zeigt sich uns auf einmal.
Dem Erfinder, welcher durch Dich des Hörers
Seele bewegt, tat sich die Schöpfung sich auf.

Abstract words move more freely than concrete words but they are dangerous because they are not circumscribed. They speak into a world without any frontiers and to men without frontiers who are no

longer men at all. If abstract words are related to the concrete fullness of things, and not to their emptiness and sterility, they will, like the conceptual words used by Dante, be heavy with this fullness.

VI

Chinese written characters are things without words, the images of things, silently speaking to one another. Chinese monosyllabic words are the sounds of the pictures; visible rather than audible.

A Chinese often cannot understand the words of Confucius or Chi-King unless he knows the pictorial symbol pertaining to the words. The symbol conveys the meaning of the spoken word. The spoken word is bound up with the written word; it refers back to the picture; it is protected by the picture. The Chinese are thereby saved from the dynamic onward rush of words. Modern China, which is turning to the dynamism of the West, is abandoning picture-writing and trying to introduce phonetic writing.

In our language words have more freedom but they are more dependent for their meaning on other words. In Chinese they stand on their own; nothing needs to be added to them; they merely need to be uncovered. The sentences of the Chinese sages are like blossoms which open and unfold before us and close again when man leaves them, opening anew when he returns. Our medieval writing was more decorative than modern writing; the lines of the letters were drawn round the object, enclosing and protecting it. Today writing rushes past the object like a motor car.

VII

There was originally a frontier between the world of painting and the world of language. Since the Renaissance the frontier has been removed. Pictures no longer speak above all as pictures. They try to speak as if they were words and man interprets the "language" of pictures in words. Language no longer dissolves into silence in front of pictures; it is no longer refreshed and renewed by them. On the contrary, pictures are in danger of being absorbed by words.

In the paintings of Grunewald, it seems as though the human face and body and even the whole picture is in danger of being torn apart; and as if through the tear, words would come out, the sound made in tearing would become the sound of words. Language and picture are not opposed to one another here. They are a unity.

In the painting of Pieter Brueghel, the pictures seem to be on their own, enjoying their own company at a feast to which man has not been invited.

It seems in Vermeer van Delft's paintings as though light were forever playing on things, instead of words. Language has left the light to play with the pictures.

The pictures of Herkules Seghers are sad and lonely because the things seem to have been forced to remain without words.

There is a light in the pictures of Rembrandt around which the images of things are gathered; they are absorbed into this light.

VIII

When he dreams, man lives with the images of things. Dreams and their images are a world on their own. One dream is related to another. Image speaks to image; images are the words of dreams; the colors of the images, the up and down of their movement are the body of the images just as vowels and consonants are the body of words. The pictures in dreams speak to one another and to man, without words.

There is no language in the images of dreams. They seem to be striving to penetrate to the realm of language. There is something unredeemed in the pictures of dreams. Are not the movements of pictures in dreams, their restlessness, a sign of their longing for words? When the first word comes in the morning after a dream it seems as though it has survived the battle against the wordless images of dreams. Man is careful with the first words that come after a dream.

The images of dreams also penetrate into the language of everyday life. It is true that in dreams, images dream predominantly for themselves, but by this very independence they affect the life of everyday.

The images of the day are made lighter by the images of dreams, they lie less heavily on the ground. They seem to belong not only to man but to another, and man is less confident of occupying things for his own purposes.

The trace of the divine that is in all language is sometimes revealed as an image in the images of

dreams: hence the fact that some dreams contain a prophecy of things to come.

IX

The images of dreams cannot be explained. The images of dreams are not affected by explanation. It only seems to make them even more independent and sovereign than before.

Psychoanalysis destroys the images of dreams, the images vanish in the process of analysis. The dream ceases to be an image, if it is leveled down to the universal pictureless condition of today; it is true that the dream-image, its pregnancy, tempts man to translate the image into words, but language must not be allowed to drown the image, which is what happens in psychoanalysis. It must clearly reveal the image as an image.

The person whose language has been destroyed seeks for the lost image by means of psychoanalysis. But psychoanalysis can only supply the shattered image—the shattered image corresponding to the shattered word.

The interest in dream-images today is due to man's realization that images, concrete images as opposed to the abstract concept, are an essential part of his spiritual make-up. The human spirit is hungry for images. In psychological analysis man tries to keep hold of the image, but instead he crumbles and dissolves it.

The picture-like quality has been destroyed in the inner and outer world today; the human face is no longer picture-like. The picture is lacking which ab-

sorbs the many things that come to the face. Everything is in front of the face, almost escaping from man himself. The face is further forward than man himself; it says more than it intends to say; it is indiscreet. In his hunger for pictures man goes to the cinema and reads the illustrated papers, but the pictures they supply him with are pseudo-pictures, not at all real pictures. They have no real life and give no real life. They merely appear in order to disappear, and they take man with them into the nothingness in which they vanish.

I believe that the increasing insomnia of today is due to the increasing lack of pictures. The spirit which is not fed with pictures is always on the lookout, always awake.

Pictures have a healing influence which comes from the healing power of the Original Picture to which the true picture belongs.

LANGUAGE AND POETRY

I

POETRY is a world of its own, a primary world, from which the poet derives his experience. The poet does not proceed from reality to poetry but from poetry to reality. The higher descends to the lower. The world of poetry seeks for an object (*res poetica diffusiva sui*) and is sought for by the object. Reality yearns to enter the world of poetry; it waits to be taken into the world of poetry. The poet moves into the world of poetry as he writes. He lives between the world of reality and the world of poetry. The poem proceeds from the poet into the world of poetry. The poet is left alone, living between the two worlds in his loneliness. Then a new poem arrives, to disappear in its turn, and again the poet is alone, until the arrival of the next poem.

A perfect poem leaves us with the feeling that there can never be another poem. This one poem seems to pervade the whole world. Then, when another poem does appear, this one has the same effect: it seems to be the only poem in the world. The presence of a poem is so powerful that it shuts out all thought of other poems. The perfect poem gives man himself actuality, existence. "A poem," according to Baudelaire, "does not state anything: it is something."

All other poems continue to exist while the one immediate poem is present, but they exist in silence.

A Shakespearean drama seems to be the center of a whole world of dramas which are all grouped around the one, waiting silently until they shall be in the center themselves. *King Henry III* is, as it were, listened to not only by the other persons in the play but also by the kings and mighty men and lovers of all plays. They are the true listeners from whom the people actually in the play learn to listen.

The perfection of a poem belongs to language as well as to man; language itself, the objective in language, aspires to perfection and becomes aware of itself in perfection. But it is man's honor that the perfection of language also belongs to him.

There is joy in language, objective, self-contained joy, when it is perfect. Language shows man that it rejoices to be perfect in man: it makes itself beautiful, by its own effort.

II

The poetry of antiquity has not been affected by the passage of time and all the things that have happened in time. Poetry creates a new unity of time, from antiquity to our own day. The fullness of ancient poetry reached forward from the beginning even into our own time. It sheds its light on ages yet to come; it moves on to us in its own light, with no consciousness of movement. It is still in antiquity as well as with us in our world today.

Such poetry gives one a sense of a universal time in which past, present and future are one. When

words are so powerful that they live on through time, creating their own future, they have to penetrate death and continue to exist in death. There is not room enough for them in life, so they strive to pass through life and find a place to live in death. Language makes man immortal.

III

The objects referred to in poetry must exist in "reality" or they must at any rate be related to a reality in which they could be present. A poem can exist only if it is sustained by real things, which it itself sustains. Poetry is the heaven above reality but it needs the solid earth of reality below, otherwise it will only be a drifting cloud. Only when reality is divorced from poetry are words needed to explain it. In Goethe's own time his poems were closer to the working man, the artisan and the peasant than they are today when they may be heard at almost any time on the radio or read in the papers. They were not isolated from the common world, they formed part of its whole pattern of sound.

Today the poet has become divorced from real things: he is hunting for them with words. Poetry can only live and thrive if it is related to real things.

A perfect poem is also related to the things which it does not specifically refer to. In a poem of Hölderlin, things which are not mentioned can also be heard. All things can be heard. The poem is representative and speaks of all things *in partibus infidelium*.

Someone wrote to me: "One is tempted to go to

poetry not only for the solitude that one lacks in this turbulent age, but also for the radiance and brightness of the world of poetry, as though there were no brightness outside poetry but only a hellish darkness . . . I have often spent a whole morning reading nothing but Hölderlin; but in the afternoon when I went for a little walk in the fields, this solid world of poetry had gone."—But the perfect poem can endure the emptiness all around it, for it mitigates it and prevents it from becoming an abyss. The emptiness arises not because the poem has left a given space, leaving it empty. The emptiness arises in the space where poetry has not yet been.

In the "real" world things move to other things and to human beings, but they move at the same time to the place where they can be free again, the world of poetry. They weigh less heavily on the earth thanks to this upward movement. Poetry makes the earth lighter by lifting things up into itself. In poetry things are images of reality, images of the earth, but at the same time they follow their own heavenly constellation. Poetry is both an image of earth and an image of heaven, and therefore poetry is both near and far, clearly revealing things in the image of earth and yet allowing them to hover in the radiance of the image of heaven.

Poetry liberates things so that they speak for themselves and are not merely spoken. In poetry all Becoming is absorbed in Being. All expediency vanishes in this life which seems to be eternal, this life of never-changing consistency.

IV

In ordinary everyday language a special act seems to be needed to bring it into being at all, whereas in poetry, language comes into being of its own accord. In poetry, language comes to man, whereas man himself has to go out to meet ordinary language. Ordinary language yearns for something else. It is dissatisfied with itself. The language of poetry on the other hand has a sense of fulfilment. Ordinary language seeks for the grace which poetry already has. In ordinary language, man hears what he says about himself and things—in poetry he listens to what things say about themselves. Poetry comes down to man from above. "There are mornings, holy dawns, when a few drops of dew fall from heaven," wrote Klopstock.

In ordinary language there is a dynamic onward urge; it lives on progress and movement. The language of poetry has a primary existence of its own. A poem does not become: it unfolds itself. With the first line of a perfect poem the whole poem is already present. What comes after the first line is not superfluous, however; it is the overflow which exceeds the merely necessary and it is therefore a gift. There is more in a poem that is absolutely necessary to describe something poetically—it is this that constitutes the true poem.

The language of poetry holds the dynamic purposefulness of ordinary language in check. The language of poetry is not more influential when the poet uses the language of everyday life. It exerts a powerful influence just because it is different.

The poet cannot overcome the tyranny of the technical world by making it the subject of his poetry. But in the blue of a hairbell he can gather together in his poem all the blueness of the earth and the solitude of all the blueness of the earth, so that the speed and noise of the technical world seem like the movement of the shadow that falls from the blue on to the machines. Airplanes are then like bees flying round the hairbell in a dream, for night and dreams are also present in the day of such a poet.

V

The poet cannot take the existence of language for granted. He has as it were to fetch it again and again from its original home; he is therefore nearer to the divine origin of language and that is the poet's grace. But in the original word the poet is also nearer to the origins of nature and the danger is that his spirit may allow itself to be swayed too much by the rhythm of nature and in particular that he may identify himself too closely with the eruptive and convulsive elements in nature. This is the reason for the nervous anxiety of the poet. He is nearer the divine origin of language than other men, but he also has a deeper abyss within himself: he is fearful of falling deeper than other men. The true poet soars above the abyss in his own spirit and sings the abyss to sleep.

The poet's temptation is constantly to tear open the abyss, to dig it ever deeper, that he may drown it again with his singing.

A LETTER

DEAR DR. M.,

You have written to me to say that when you are studying a poem such as the following by Goethe with your pupils, you advise them to go out into the fields alone and try to experience the twilight there as it is described in the poem:

Dämmerung senkte sich von oben
Schon ist alle Nähe fern;
Doch zuerst emporgehoben
Holden Lichts der Abendstern!
Alles schwankt ins Ungewisse,
Nebel schleichen in die Höh';
Schwarzvertiefte Hindernisse
Widerspiegeln ruht die See.

That is just what Abbé Bremond says. He believes the poet is trying to direct us to a particular experience, to transplant us into a particular, higher situation. To my mind that is a false interpretation of the poet's task. Experience and the emotion roused by experience is characteristic neither of the process of writing poetry nor of the process of understanding it.

Through real poetry the reader or listener is drawn into the life of the poem, he becomes part of it: it was thus that the listeners to Greek tragedy belonged to the tragedy.

The categories of "emotion" and "experience" are

far too trivial. They only exist in the psychic sphere. Never has humanity been so moved to the depths as in our own time and never has there been so little poetry as now. The primary factor in the writing of poetry is not experience or emotion but creative power. Otherwise every depth-psychological soul-shaker and his patients would be poets. The creative power of the poet leads to experience. The creative power must come first, not the experience. The poet's task is not to translate experience into poetry. That would deprive him of all originality. Needless to say, a poem is preceded by an encounter with things. But the encounter is only fully realized in and through the poem by means of which it becomes a perfect encounter. The poem is superior to the encounter that precedes it. It is also superior to time. The magic of poetry is that it annuls the sequence of ordinary time.

It is wrong to teach children to take hold of things emotionally. They must be brought to recognize the existence of things and to understand things to which they are not bound emotionally. Emotion, the immediacy of emotion, is not the measure of things. It is, as Hegel said, only a beginning which has to be surpassed. Emotion must be fashioned to the shape of the objective reality that is lacking in pure emotion.

I believe that a poem represents and transmits truth, above all things. The poet and the understanding listener (or pupil) meet on the basis of truth. The poem leads the listener into the sphere of truth.

The truth of a poem does not detract from its beauty in spite of the fact that truth is the only cate-

gory worthy of poetry. The truth of a poem aspires to the Original Truth and beauty is the radiance with which poetic truth illumines its way to the Original Truth.

Your M.P.

THE PRE-GIVEN WORLD OF POETRY

I

IT HAS been forgotten today that poetry does not merely depend on the poet himself, but that, like everything pertaining to the basic structure of man, it is given to him in advance. "We have not been made to have made everything, to sit on the ethereal dream summit of the universe but on the rising steps which lead to the gods and beside the gods" wrote Jean Paul.

The poet makes poetry with the poetry that is given to him in advance. Poetry has an objective existence of its own. There is poetry in the world before man even begins to write poetry. Man responds to the poetry that comes to him by writing poetry of his own. The poet is more in dialogue with this pre-given objective and the eternal world of poetry than with himself and other human beings. When I read Stifter's "Witiko" for the first time I knew that poetry was in the world before the advent of man.

The poetry that comes to the poet as a gift from without is not the poetry that other poets, past poets and living poets bring to the poet but it is the poetry that is given to the poet before ever he has knowledge of other poets, past or present.

This objective world of poetry was created in the act of the creation of man himself and woven into his structure. In this pre-given world of poetry the poet meets with the origins and beginnings of things and his own personal originality finds its measure therein.

The pre-given world of poetry is objective, something that, whilst it belongs to man, belongs to him essentially, nevertheless reaches out beyond him. It provides the basis for every objective relationship. Because it is woven into man's structure, he does not have to make a special effort to establish a relationship with the objective, it is part of his original existence.

The objectivity of this pre-given world of poetry is not identical with what is sometimes called "objective poetry." It is not the same as what Dilthey characterized as the objective poetry of Goethe. "In seeking for the structural laws and permanent forms in human life, he organized the motley throng of phenomena into a number of basic types, of man, relationships and society." The objectivity of the pre-given world of poetry exists before these objective laws; the poet can apply them only because he has already received them from the objective and eternal world in which they are contained.

The poet who has objectivity within himself, as part of his structure, does not need to jump behind the object, does not need to take it by surprise, to occupy it in the way that Ernst Jünger occupies them. He captures the object as though it belonged to himself alone and to no one else. He does not seem to

want anyone else to share the object. The Thou is lacking in Jünger: there is no love. The image is inclusive and imprisoning. The image is not really perfect but it does have the technical perfection of a machine. One can almost hear the image hacking its way into the object.

The perfect image, however, is like the dream which the object dreams about itself. The effect of the perfect image is to make the object belong more to itself, not to the poet.

The objectivity of the pre-given world of poetry is the basis on which the poetic act takes place: it holds the poem together.

In a poem one can feel the trembling excitement with which the poet has awaited the gift of poetry: it is present in the rhythm. But one can also sense the relief he has felt when the gift has been accepted: there is both excitement and serenity in the rhythm.

When the poet is no longer in touch with the objective and eternal world of poetry, he will find it difficult to maintain the poetic state. It will always seem to be on the point of dissolution. And this is true of a great deal of poetry today: one feels that the poet is in such danger of losing his hold that a special act is needed to keep every word in place in the poem. He has to be constantly checking to see whether the poem still is a poem: if the poet is not free towards the poem, he cannot be carefree. If a poem of this kind, in which the poet has had to make a constant effort, were to describe our whole world of machines and the threats that imperil our existence, it would

be appropriate to our time, but only because of the effort that had been put into it, not because of poetry in it. Our time is supremely one of effort and exertion.

Divorced from the objective world of poetry the poet has difficulty in maintaining his hold on poetry. The same kind of difficulty is apparent in architecture. Some modern buildings seem to have just enough stability to stand upright but no independent power of their own, no power to transcend the rudimentary laws of statics, no power to impose sovereign laws of their own on themselves.

II

Where the objective world of poetry is present, a poem will contain something more than the purely personal, something that holds the poem together, something that detaches it from the poet and gives it a freedom of its own. The poem will come to us: we will not have to go out and search for it.

Goethe's poem "*Dämmerung senkte sich von oben . . .*" (see before, p. 143) comes floating towards us on its own, quite apart from the poet: it is a being with a life of its own, yet it is not remote and aloof. Because it contains more than the poet himself put into it, it is more poetic than the poet could have made it: it has a life of its own preceding and also surviving the poet.

This extra and independent life can also survive the weaknesses of the poem. Defects are possible even in a great poem, human rather than poetic defects, due to the fundamental rupture in the human structure as such. For this reason the empty passages in

Gotthelf, for example, seem as natural as a drought in the world of nature, and caused by the structure of man rather than by a weakness in Gotthelf himself.

It is because of this extra, independent life contained in a true poem that it is impossible fully to explain or interpret a true poem. A poem that contains within it something of the being of the eternal world takes us to the beginnings and origins of man, which are impossible to fathom since they are bound up with Creation itself. Once a poem has lost all relationship with the eternal world from which true poems come, it is as easy to analyze and explain as a machine.

A perfect poem goes on creating poetry. The same words are revealed in ever changing forms. The poem remains the same but it changes in the course of time, thus remaining alive in every age. It is like the beloved in Goethe's poem who remains the same however often her outward form is changed:

In tausend Formen magst du dich verstecken,
Doch, Allerliebste, gleich erkenn' ich dich;
Du magst mit Zauberschleiern dich bedecken,
Allgegenwärtige, gleich erkenn' ich dich.

Poems of inferior quality are swept away by the passage of time. For example, the poetry of Dehmel disappeared within roughly ten years of his death, though no critic had attacked it. Through the independent life that comes into a poem from the eternal world, a poem is able to reach out beyond itself; it draws something of the objective world into itself so that it contains more than it actually names or describes.

Poetry lives and grows by attracting other things to itself. Such poetry carries itself beyond the present moment of time, it already bears future time within itself. "Poets seem to be alone, but they always have presentiments," says Hölderlin.

The horrors of the first World War were already contained in some of the poems of Trakl. A prophetic poem of this kind also has the power of pointing to the things in the present which must be taken into the future. It can have the power of taking the present into the future, the power of actually shaping history. In a poem of this kind a historical fact may be projected forward into a sphere transcending the historical. When, for example, Virgil extols the little child, he is referring to the child of the Imperial house, but the praise reaches out beyond Virgil himself to the divine child Jesus who is to come.

When a poem lacks the independent life of the eternal world, it also lacks the specifically poetic quality. In many modern poems what they express merely happens to be expressed in words. This could be expressed in other ways, by an action, a mathematical formula or by a machine. Poetry is thereby leveled down to a purely mechanical function. Poetry acquires its exclusive and unique quality from its connection with the pre-given eternal world. Today, poetry is uncertain of itself, because it is not specifically poetry at all but is capable of being replaced by any other medium. The poetry that is not specifically poetry, seems so insecure that it would only need the decree of a dictator to suppress it altogether. The poems of Goethe, of Hölderlin, of Trakl, would con-

tinue to sing of their own accord, out-singing the dictator's decree.

The poems that have no connection with the eternal world are not essentially different from one another; they are all related, though they come from different authors and different periods. They form a single conglomeration, which increases as though by mere proliferation, like unicellular creatures. The person perishes in this agglomeration, or makes farcical efforts to make itself visible. This kind of poetry reproduces itself as it were in a horizontal line, whereas the poetry from the eternal world comes down from above. It breaks the horizontal flow of things, coming directly from the Origin, and every poem seems to be the first to have come from the Origin and appeared among men. All the real poets are related to one another because they come from this original and eternal world and therefore the same person can understand such diverse poets as Li-Tai-Pe and Ronsard and Hölderlin.

III

That which is anterior to the poem is important, but as Malherbe wrote, "les fruits passeront la promesses des fleurs." The poem is more important than that which precedes it. That which is anterior is justified by the poem, for it exists for the sake of the poem of whose texture it forms a part.

Compared with that which is anterior to the poem, the person of the poet is unimportant. The more significant the power of the "anterior," and the more everything arises from it, especially in the early ages

of poetry, the more the person of the poet himself recedes. Jean Paul observes, "The self-forgetfulness of the Greek poets is often very moving, and even when they do remember themselves, it is merely as the object of the object. Thus, for example, no modern poet would have represented himself so simply and so unassumingly as did Phidias on the shield of his Minerva, as an old man throwing a stone."

This anterior, objective substance is almost wholly lacking in modern poetry. There is an emptiness where it is lacking. Few people are even aware that it is lacking. But when the poets notice the emptiness, their poems become a song sung around what is lacking. Rilke has within him the space that has been emptied of objective substance; the other poets have even thrown away the emptiness. In reading Rilke one has the impression that he could have had the objective substance, but he refused to have it. He wanted to be the poet of this age, which no longer has the objective substance. He was the poet who deliberately remained unborn, because the whole age was unborn. He was generous, unselfish.

It must be asked whether the emptiness, the abyss, is not trivialized by the beauty of Rilke's poetry? Does not the abyss cease to be menacing and dangerous because of this poetry? Is the abyss not cherished and wooed, felt to be full of charm, since it has given rise to such beautiful poetry?

Medieval poets, Dante, for example, also sang around an abyss, the abyss of hell, made beautiful poetry around it—but it was the beauty that is in God's creation, even in its abysses, that they expressed

in their poetry. The abyss existed as an abyss, it was not absorbed by the beauty of the poetry, it did not vanish in that beauty, as it does in Rilke's poetry.

Possibly the reason for Rilke's unrest and nervousness was that he, who wanted to live a true life, sensed the discrepancy between the horror of the abyss and the beauty of his poetry, in which beauty he lost his fear of the abyss itself, the abyss which he honestly wanted to face. The abyss vanished in the poetry, but the poet himself was also lost.

Paul Klee wrote:

Mein Stern ging auf
Tief unter meinen Füßen.
Wo haust im Winter mein Fuchs,
Wo schläft meine Schlange?

The star that is no longer seen above, has burrowed "below." It sometimes seems as though this kind of poet were trying to hide himself in a burrow, and to forever disappear therein. But the emptiness is industrialized by the literature of Sartre and his school, it becomes part of the universal technical routine. This is a degradation of the emptiness.

IV

How can the pre-given, objective substance of poetry be rediscovered by the poet, how can it return? It might be thought that when the other original phenomena which form part of the basic human structure, religion, human relationships, man's relationship with nature and the "folk," are taken for granted again as part of the basic human order, poetry too will return

to its pre-given substance, or rather that the original substance of poetry will become so clear that man must inevitably accept it. It is possible that this is so, but faced with the reality of what is lacking, this possibility is insignificant. The reality of what is missing is so intensive that man is bound to pull up here. That which is missing is so tremendous that it puts the feeble possibility completely in the shade. That which is missing confronts man so clearly that his eye is bound to rest on it.

But if the eye always gazes at this emptiness, and constantly embraces it, then a space will be delimited, a space will be created into which what is missing, the pre-given, objective substance will be almost sucked in. If man takes what is lacking completely seriously, if he is constantly aware that the lack of the pre-given substance in his structure is making him ill, the seriousness of his awareness will reach by its very truth to the truth of the creative beginnings of things and hence to the pre-given original substance.

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